



The Exploration of Online Learning based on the Blended Teaching Model of *Intercultural Communication*

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Abstract. In times of information explosion and Internet technology, cultivating the students' ability to think, learn and apply creatively is the core of teaching. The blended teaching model, supported by information technology, has transformed traditional classroom teaching into flexible "3A" learning. This paper elaborates on the three-step online learning process adopted in the Intercultural Communication course, which centers around students' needs by combining effective digital tools, flexible teaching methods and diverse online learning resources. The research indicates that online learning based on the blended teaching model has motivated the students, developed their management ability and creativity, and brought learning satisfaction.

Keywords: online learning, blended teaching model, Intercultural Communication

1 INTRODUCTION

Relying on the rapid development of information technology, human beings are striding from the era of knowledge to the era of wisdom. In the era of knowledge, due to the asymmetry of information, knowledge has always been the focus of classroom teaching, while in the era of wisdom, knowledge has become readily available, and what is scarce is the ability to think, learn and apply knowledge creatively, which cannot be directly taught in the classroom, but must be obtained through practical training and the accumulation of experience. Therefore, the focus of teaching must shift from directly imparting knowledge to unlocking wisdom.

With the continuous advance of information technology and its integration with education, blended teaching has become an important approach of improving learning process and outcome. It breaks the limitation of time and space and transforms traditional classroom teaching into "3A" learning (anyone, anytime, anywhere). Effective learning software and rich digital resources have brought new ways of learning and accelerated the development of the blended teaching model, which gives full play to the advantages and potential of online learning.

2 THE BLENDED TEACHING MODEL

The blended teaching model in this study refers to the educational model that integrates a traditional classroom setting and an online learning environment [4]. The teacher utilizes a digital platform that can carry out such functions as distributing resources and assignments, recording learning process, analysing learning effectiveness, etc. The teacher also utilizes various teaching tools and course content such as videos, instructions, task specifications to engage and motivate students; students have more flexibility in when, how, and where they receive instruction. They can access learning materials at their own pace and take time to reinforce what they learned in class. Therefore, the blended teaching model is more student-centric.

3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication is complicated and at times contradictory. The main body of intercultural communication (the learners) needs "the original executive power in cultural progress"[7]. The course of Intercultural Communication attaches importance to the cultivation and improvement of intercultural communication ability.

4 THE SPECIFIC TEACHING IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Reform of the Course Content and Implementation Plan

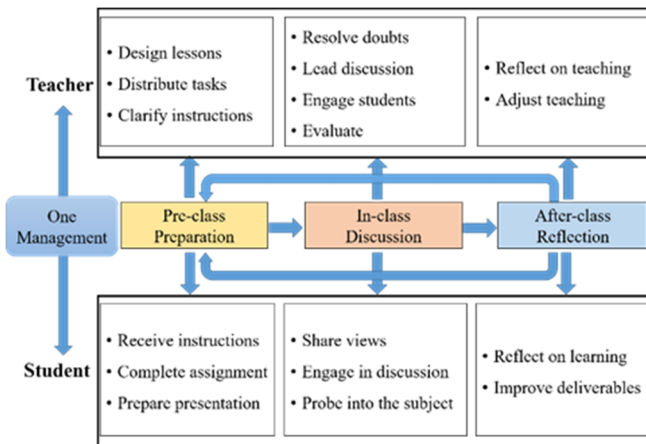


Fig. 1. Teachers' Work and Students' Tasks in the Blended Teaching Model

The course needs to focus on teaching design, student-centered teaching methods, process assessment and evaluation mechanisms. The teaching process is divided into three stages: pre-class preparation, in-class discussion, and after-class reflection.

Teacher's Work.*Pre-class preparation.*

Effective blended teaching depends first on the common understanding of teachers and students. Before the class begins, the teacher needs to clearly explain to the students the meaning, rules, general arrangements and mutual commitments to each other so that students can clearly understand what they need to do and how to do it in the learning process.

In-class discussion.

The main purpose of class discussion is to answer questions, dispel doubts, deepen understanding of the theme and promote critical thinking. The teacher summarizes the common questions and explains them in class, and conducts random inspections on the students' self-learning effect.

After-class evaluation and reflection.

After the in-class discussion, the teacher should evaluate and summarize the students' discussions, reflect on the problems in the discussion and the reasons for these problems, and at the same time, through regular discussions with the teaching team, adjust the discussion process in time, methods and strategies to form effective and efficient blended teaching methods and strategies.

Students' Tasks.

In the blended learning model, students' tasks are also divided into three stages, namely pre-class preparation, in-class discussion and after-class reflection, and learning management throughout the three stages.

Pre-class preparation.

In the beginning, students should receive all the notices about the course: preparing the hardware, logging in to the learning platform, reading the course introduction, clarifying the learning arrangement, learning tasks and evaluation methods, and at the same time clarifying the division of study groups, as well as the requirements and deadlines of each specific task. Understanding what they need to do (What), how to do it (How), and why they do it (Why) in the learning process will lay a good foundation for the smooth development of blended learning.

In-class discussion.

Students work in groups and give presentations in turn on the assigned topic. They should share their views with appropriate evidence or research to back up their statements. Other group members may agree, disagree or ask further questions. It is important to make sure that every student has the same opportunity to speak. They are also encouraged to probe into the subject and meaningfully synthesize the connection between their experiences and the fields of study.

After-class reflection.

After class, students summarize the result of their thinking and learning behavior based on the teacher's evaluation and feedback, and revise their homework or project deliverables. Through timely reflection of independent learning and "face-to-face" exchanges, the understanding and application of knowledge are enhanced, abilities are improved, and the acquisition of wisdom is achieved.

4.2 Management in Online Learning

The Application of Learning Platform and Communication Tools.

The online learning process is carried out on the digital learning platform. In the pre-class preparation stage, students receive instructions and requirements on the platform; they watch micro-course videos and study other learning resources according to their own needs and pace. Through the learning records on the platform, the teacher can detect the difficulties students encounter and provide targeted guidance and supplement resources. In class, communication tools like WeChat, Ding Talk and QQ are used for group discussion and presentations. The direct, open communication greatly extends the functionality of the classroom, and helps students to discover problems in their work and actively learn from those around them. After class, students submit homework, display deliverables, complete self-evaluation and questionnaire survey on the platform, and the teacher makes adjustments and optimizations for the next step of teaching based on the platform data.

Self-Management in Independent Learning and Online Meetings.

By jointly formulating class rules, setting up roles such as class leaders and supervisors, and establishing communication groups and sharing groups through communication tools, students can manage their classes online and offline during the whole course of learning.

The transformation from the traditional classroom managed by teachers to the self-management classes by students under the guidance of teachers can not only allow students to comprehend their role and enhance their management abilities, improve their awareness of self-motivation and self-management, but also form a good learning atmosphere, increase the compliance with the jointly developed classroom rules, thus help the teacher focus more on teaching and instruction instead of keeping disciplines in the teaching process.

Diversified Evaluation System.

Blended teaching focuses on the overall development of students, so the performance evaluation is not simply determined by the test results. The evaluation in the integrated teaching is diversified and multi-dimensional, covering knowledge, ability, emotion, attitude and other aspects. Specific formats include online learning and classroom discussions, individual learning and group assignments, in either written or oral form. The traditional subjective assessment by teachers is replaced by a combination of various evaluation approaches, including peer evaluation, self-evaluation, etc. The evaluation standards for various homework are clarified in advance, and students are allowed to

participate in grading. While improving the openness and fairness of grades, students can learn more from each other through peer evaluation.

5 ANALYSIS OF ONLINE LEARNING EFFECT

5.1 Research Method and Process

This study is based on the blended teaching research questionnaires of Yang Fang [7] to form the "Questionnaire on Teaching Situation of Intercultural Communication Course". The questionnaire consists of 20 questions, including two parts: 1) Improvement of core abilities, including problem-solving ability, teamwork ability, self-learning ability and intercultural ability; 2) Effectiveness of blended teaching design, including individual learning flexibility, community learning interactivity, the effectiveness of process supports and the diversity in emotion construction. The questionnaire was filled out anonymously 2 weeks after the course using an online survey tool. (website: <https://www.wjx.cn/wjx>). 285 valid questionnaires were collected.

5.2 Findings

Core Ability Training Goal Achievement.

As for whether the blended learning model can effectively improve intercultural communication skills, the results of the questionnaire show that the students agree that this blended learning teaching model can effectively improve the profession-related English ability. It can be seen from TABLE 1 that among the five options for ability development related to the teaching objectives of the course, the proportion of "Very satisfied" and "Satisfied" is about 90%. Among them, 92.99% of the students believed that the intercultural communication course cultivated intercultural language skills.

Table 1. Core ability development satisfaction

Items	Total	Percentage
The learning process makes me more open to learning tasks and more mature when dealing with interpersonal work.	246	86.32%
My problem-solving ability is improved.	255	89.48%
My intercultural language ability is improved.	265	92.99%
My self-learning ability is improved.	257	90.17%
My teamwork ability is improved.	257	90.17%

Learning Flexibility.

Real learning is the realization of meaningful learning for individuals by providing rich video, text and other MOOC learning resources [3]. The independently designed and produced online teaching resources include 8 texts, 39 videos, and nearly 200 test questions. Students can learn according to their own learning style and pace. In addition, the refined, selected learning resources and the well-designed test questions can guide students to deep learning from superficial learning [1]. Assigning tasks from elementary

to intermediate and advanced levels equip students with the opportunity to produce, the condition to produce, and the confidence to produce, thereby stimulating learning motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

Blended teaching provides learners with the option of learning at their own pace anytime and anywhere. Students can slow down, speed up or pause their learning. (TABLE 2). Different students use different approaches to work towards the same goal. 37.19% of the students study less than two hours a week, and 54.04% study between 2 and 4 hours a week. Meanwhile, 57.19% of the students liked to study in the morning on weekdays, 40.35% chose to study in the afternoon on weekdays, 48.77% study in the evening on weekdays, and 32.98% study on weekends.

Table 2. Flexibility of intercultural communication course

Items	Total	Percentage
Online learning makes learning flexible in time and space.	279	97.9%
Online learning enables me to choose my own learning content and important points.	255	89.47
I developed my own learning habit through online learning.	232	81.4%

Learning Interactivity and Support in the Learning Process.

The survey results show that although the learners are “digital natives” of the Internet age, they are open to both online and offline communication. 74.38% like online discussions through QQ and WeChat, while 74.73 % prefer offline in-class discussions, and 81.84% like to discuss with their study group members. (TABLE 3).

In the teaching process, teachers keep timely follow-up of students' learning through the MOOC platform. The data-driven process supports and feedback is open and clear. Teachers provide scaffolding in language knowledge, skill training and emotion construction through strategies such as guidance, supervision, adjustment and evaluation, so as to help students concentrate on completing learning tasks, improve self-management and time management capabilities, guiding them to self-driven learning.

Table 3. Interactivity and process support

Items	Total	Percentage
I love online interaction with group members, using QQ, etc.	212	74.38%
I love face-to-face interaction more.	213	74.73%
Online self-learning blended with online group discussion is effective in interaction.	232	81.4%
Online self-learning blended with online group discussion help supervise the learning process.	236	82.81%
Online self-learning blended with online group discussion gives me freedom and improves my self-discipline.	256	89.82%
Formative assessment encourages me to learn.	257	90.18%
Online self-learning blended with online group discussion creates a good learning atmosphere.	252	88.42%
Online self-learning blended with online group discussion reduces loneliness.	230	80.7%

Online self-learning blended with online group discussion stimulates my drive to learn.	233	81.76%
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6 CONCLUSIONS

The practice of the blended teaching mode of the intercultural communication course ensures the quality of teaching. By organically integrating online and offline activities and output, and promoting evaluations among teachers and students, knowledge is built, meaningful individual learning is activated, and the learning experience is enhanced. Students complete the process of knowing, doing and developing wisdom. Reflections over various activities help to deepen the students' understanding of not only the content knowledge but also the management knowledge, increasing management ability as well as the deposit of management wisdom.

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