A Comparative Study on the Effective-ness of Blended and Offline TeachingModes：Case Study of Business English Course

XIRONG CHEN

College of Foreign Languages
Minjiang University
Fuzhou, China

Email: 1972@mju.edu.cn

Abstract. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, this paper tries to compare and analyze the teaching effects of blended teaching mode and the traditional offline teaching mode in business English course. Based on the test results and interviews, the study shows that: 1) blended teaching mode can significantly improve students' learning performance; 2）blended teaching mode could enhance students' learning initiative and enthusiasm by reconstructing the traditional classroom teaching. Therefore, teachers should focus on using a combination of online and offline teaching modes to cultivate students' independent learning ability, inspire their interest in learning and achieve better teaching effects.

Keywords: blended teaching mode; offline teaching mode; teaching effectiveness comparison; business English course

1   INTRODUCTION

The Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Deepening the Reform of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education emphasizes that "all regions and universities should accelerate the opening of online courses such as MOOCs and video open courses, use big data technology to grasp students' learning needs and patterns, and strive to provide a variety of educational resources for students' independent learning" [1]. In order to make English teaching more effective, teachers should properly apply modern information technology in teaching to meet the requirements of the times, and undoubtedly blended teaching mode is one of the best alternatives，for it combines face-to-face classroom teaching with online learning supported by information technology, reconstructs teaching design and teaching organization activities with the advantages of two learning environments, aiming at improving teaching efficiency and learning effect [2].

In China, Professor He Kekang was the first to propose the concept of blended teaching as "the combination of various learning methods in traditional classroom teaching,

such as the combination of teaching methods using new media and traditional teaching methods, the combination of computer-assisted teaching and teachers' single lecture method, and the combination of students' independent learning and collaborative learning" [3]. Sejdi applied blended teaching model to English language teaching and assessment to determine whether it was better than face-to-face teaching, and found that the former was more effective than the latter in ELT[4]. Sezen Tosun conducted an empirical study on the effectiveness of blended instruction on vocabulary learning for EFL learners. The results of the trial showed that the learners in blended learning mode showed a significant increase in motivation and engagement in learning [5]. Chen Xirong mentions the benefits of blended teaching of business English in terms of enhancing students' learning initiative and enthusiasm [6], but there is a lack of concrete data to prove the better learning effects of blended teaching model could achieve compared with offline teaching model. In view of this, based on the real test results and interviews of students and taking the teaching practice of "Business English" course as an example, this paper tries to explore what learning effects of blended teaching mode could achieve compared with the traditional offline teaching mode.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives was first developed in 1956 and subsequently refined and revised by Lorraine Anderson, Churches and others to meet the contemporary educational needs. As a result, a more complete Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives was developed, which includes six stages: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

In the learning process, learners not only need to memorize and understand knowledge, but also need to process, analyze and apply the new knowledge learnt in a complex way so that they can fully absorb and internalize the knowledge to achieve the learning effect. In the traditional offline classroom, students can only complete two levels of knowledge and comprehension in class due to the constraints of time and teaching methods.

However, this problem can be solved through blended teaching model. In the big data environment, a large number of teaching resources, learning resources and various intelligent systems are stored in the resource management platform. Teachers can make new knowledge available to the students through instructional videos posted online before class. In offline class, teachers will highlight key knowledge points and encourage students to raise, discuss and solve problems. Both before and after class, students have access to timely help from the teacher on line, as well as the freedom to discuss and collaborate with their peers. Such targeted learning helps students to cultivate high-order abilities of applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating [7].

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, this paper tries to explore what learning effects of blended learning model could achieve in "Business English" course.

3   EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The experimental research design of this study mainly included research questions, research subjects, research methods, and the collection and organization of research data.

3.1   Research Questions

In order to explore the learning effectiveness of blended teaching mode, the research included the following questions: (1) Does blended teaching mode significantly improve students' learning performance compared with the traditional offline teaching method? (2) In what ways can blended teaching have a positive impact on students' learning in business courses?

3.2   Experimental Subjects

 The subjects of the study were two classes of Business English major in a university of Fujian Province. One of them was the experimental class with 40 students and the other was the control one with 40 students. The business English teacher in the two classes was the same, and the students were taught in essentially the same environment. Moreover, the final exam papers used in the two classes were of the same content to meet the syllabus requirements. In this study, blended teaching mode was adopted by the experimental class, while the traditional offline teaching mode was for the control classes.

3.3   Experimental Instruments

This study mainly adopted quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis was conducted through the tests related to business English course, while the qualitative analysis adopted interview method to investigate the impact of the blended teaching mode on students' learning interest and effect.

1)Tests.
    The test papers of the two classes were the same, which minimized the interference of other factors on the experimental results of this study and enhanced the accuracy of the experiment. Through test paper examinations, the test results of the two classes were recorded, compared and analyzed in detail.

2) Interview.
    In order to understand the students' learning of business English, six students (three in the experimental class and three in the control class) were randomly selected for face-to-face interviews, aiming to get a preliminary understanding of students' ideas about the current offline teaching of business English and their learning status.

Two interview questions were separately asked to the students in the experimental and control class: (1) Has the application of blended/offline teaching model affected your learning interest, classroom participation, and academic performance? Please elaborate on your views. (2) Are you satisfied with blended/offline teaching mode adopted in business English course?

3.4   Experimental Process

This experimental teaching work focused on the analysis of the practical use of blended teaching model in business English course. Before implementing the experimental work, the teacher should determine the type of teaching according to the teaching objectives, key points and difficulties of the course, and carry out the actual teaching work according to the teaching plan.

1) Development of teaching plans.

Business English is a practical business communication course that integrates business knowledge, language skills and intercultural communicative competence, aiming at cultivating students' ability to use English for business communication and problem-solving in intercultural contexts. The course design should make full use of the online platform to provide students with a wide variety of learning resources, focus on the "online" and "offline" teaching modes to complement and combine each other, so as to maximize the advantages of blended teaching mode.

2) Implementation of teaching plans.

Blended learning, defined as a combination of face-to-face and online learning, is expected to lead to improved education. Besides, practical reasons, like increased access to education and resource management, are mentioned for its implementation. [8]. The university chose blended learning as a way to increase enrolment by more efficiently utilizing existing classroom space, to provide greater convenience to its commuter students, to engage students more in their courses, and to improve student learning [9]. In order to prevent students from feeling tired of learning due to their unfamiliarity with blended teaching model, careful teaching plans are essential. Online teaching and offline teaching are closely linked, and the teaching content and form are rich and colorful. Before class, students preview in advance. In class, the teacher interacts with students by organizing various activities, such as case study and role play. After class, the teacher and students summarize and evaluate the course together. Online and offline combination provides students with modernization that meets their needs in all aspects. In class, the teacher verifies the teaching effect by data statistics, classroom observations, questionnaires, interviews and test scores to further improve teaching mode. What cannot be overlooked is that in blended teaching model, not only are offline classes flexible and versatile, but the teacher has changed the previous role to become the instructor of students, with more emphasis on organizing and guiding.

4   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the experimental design, the final grade results of the two classes and the student interview records were analyzed. The test statistics of the classes were shown as follows.

4.1   Results and Discussion of Tests

According to the test result, the mean value of the experimental class was 74.68 and the mean value of the control class was 66.25, a significant increase of 8.43. The figure indicated that students who participated in blended teaching model were able to achieve better results in business English course, while students in the control class under single offline teaching model lagged far behind those in the experimental class. In addition, the following Figure 1 made a comparison of in-course achievement in "Business English" between the experimental class and control class.
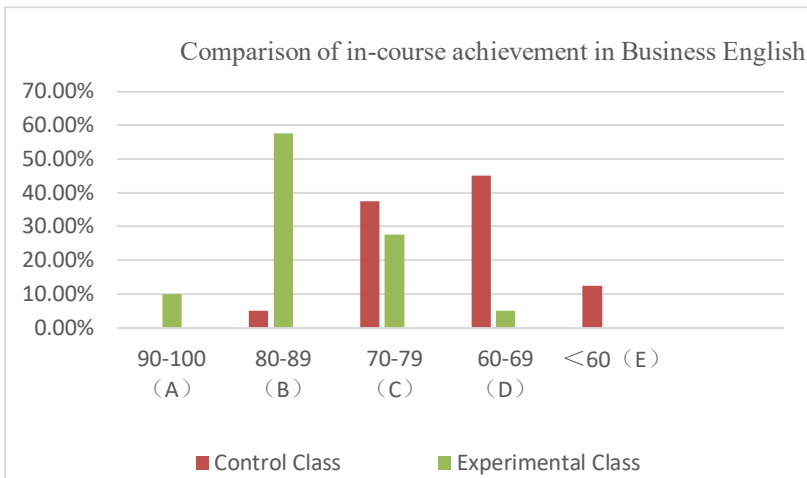

Fig. 1. Comparison of in-course achievement in "Business English"

According to Figure 1, no students in the control class achieved a score of 90 or above, with only 2 students scored within 80-90 mark range, accounting for 5% of the class. However, 16 students scored between 70-79 and 18 students between 60-69, with the proportion of 37.50% and 45% respectively of the class. In addition, 5 students failed, accounting for 12.50%. It is evident that under the single offline teaching mode, only quite a few students achieved good grades and most of them scored moderately or even below the pass mark.

On the contrary, the in-course achievement of the experimental class students was more positive. 4 of them scored above 90, while 23 scored between 80-89, with the proportion（57.50%）of over 10 times higher than that of the control class（5%）. Furthermore, 11 students scored at an intermediate level and only 2 scored between 60-

69, and there were no students who failed. This showed that the students in the experimental class did much better in their academic performance compared with those in the control class. In fact, the students in the experimental class reached a new level of achievement under blended teaching mode.

4.2   Results and Discussion of Interviews

The author firstly interviewed three randomly selected students in the experimental class, aiming to understand their real emotional attitude about blended teaching mode, and their views on business English learning. The main content of the interviews was as follows.

1)Teachers: Has the application of blended teaching model affected your learning interest, offline class participation, and academic performance? Please elaborate on your views.

In this interview, students were positive about blended teaching model. There were three reasons for this: (1) By blended course students can benefit from increased time and spatial flexibility for their study, wider and easier access to learning resources, and a higher level of autonomy in regulating their learning [10]. (2) Students can continuously consolidate and deepen their understanding of the course content through pre-class discussion and after-class feedback. (3) Interesting online learning has a positive impact on arousing students' interest in learning business English.

2) Teachers: Are you satisfied with the blended teaching mode adopted in business English course? Do you support the application of this teaching model?

In the interview, students expressed support for blended teaching model with these reasons: (1) Students first familiarize themselves with knowledge on line and in offline class the teacher explains difficult points to them, which will improve students' comprehension. (2) The teacher's initiative and patience in helping students give them confidence to learn new knowledge. (3) The formative assessment is more objective for the diversified evaluation can fully reflect students' understanding and more conductive to improve their learning initiative.

At the same time, in order to understand the views of the control class about fully offline teaching mode, the author randomly asked three students nearly the same questions, aiming to understand the learning status of the students in business English course.

As to the first question, from the interview we learned that: (1) Fully offline class cannot provide students with sufficient learning resources after class. (2) Purely offline teaching model cannot fully stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning.

As to the second question "Are you satisfied with the current offline teaching model", the students seemed to be unsatisfied with fully offline course. There are several reasons for this: (1) As offline teaching has time and space constraints, students are unable to absorb new knowledge in a short period of time. (2) The knowledge covered in offline teaching is relatively homogeneous and students lack channels to expand their knowledge. (3) Students often receive knowledge passively and are unable to internalize it through practice.

5   Conclusion

Through the analysis and discussion of the experimental results, we have found that blended teaching model can markedly improve students' academic performance and enhance their learning interest. From a qualitative analysis, it is clear that students in blended teaching mode are significantly more motivated to learn than those in fully offline teaching mode. Students believe that blended learning can help them learn more useful knowledge, broaden their international perspective, master professional knowledge, and gain confidence in applying acquired knowledge into practice.

To sum up, in the information age, on the one hand, the application of blended teaching mode can effectively improve students' learning efficiency and enrich teachers' teaching methods. On the other hand, it can further optimize the offline teaching process, give full play to students' learning initiative, autonomy and creativity, and thus help improve students' application ability to achieve better learning effects.

Acknowledgment

References

1. Liu, H., Gu,S.M. (2020) On the online and offline teaching mode of the college English cultural courses. China Journal of Multimedia & Network Teaching, 5:1-3. https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2020&filename=JMNT202006001.
2. Li, F.Q, Han, X.L. (2017) The construction and demonstration of blending teaching quality evaluation system. China Educational Technology,11:.108-113. DOI: 10.3969/j.issn.1006-9860.2017.11.016.
3. He, K.K.(2004) On the new development of education information theory from the perspective of blended learning. China Educational Technology, 3:.5-10. DOI: 10.3969/j.issn.1006-9860.2004.03.001.
4. Sejdiu, S.(2014) English language teaching and assessment in blended learning. Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology, 3:67-82. doi: 10.14434/jotlt.v3n2.5043.
5. Tosun, S. (2015) The effects of blended learning on EFL students' vocabulary enhancement. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 199: 641-647. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.592.
6. Chen,X.R.(2019) An exploration of blended teaching model based on CBI. China Educational Technology, 12:.129-134. doi: 10.3969/j.issn.1006-9860.2019.12.018.
7. Cao, P.S. (2020) An empirical study on the effectiveness of ESP blended teaching based on a flipped classroom approach. Foreign Language World, 6:87-94. https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAST2021&filename=WYJY202006012

8. Spanjers, I.A.E.(2015) The promised land of blended learning:Quizzes as a moderator. Educational Research Review,15:59-74. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.05.001.

9. Owston, R., York, D. , Murtha, S. (2013)Student perceptions and achievement in a university blended learning strategic initiative. The Internet and Higher Education,18:38-46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2012.12.003.

10. Poon, J.(2012) Use of blended learning to enhance the student learning experience and engagement in property education. Property Management, .30: 129–156. doi:10.1108/02637471211213398.