



The Application of Blended Learning in Primary School English Oral Teaching

Take Primary School A for example

Xiexin Wang

College of Teacher Education, Ningbo University, Ningbo, Zhejiang, China

Email: 216000562@nbu.edu.cn

Abstract. Blended learning that incorporates a variety of information technologies is of great value in the field of oral English teaching in primary schools. Due to the deep-rooted traditional teaching function and the test-oriented education concepts, only a few studies focus on the implementation in primary school's oral English class. This work aims to explore the current usage of blended learning of oral English in primary school A. The results, based on the questionnaire survey of 124 pupils and interviews with 3 teachers, show that primary school English teachers have consciously used blended learning to present a more lively class. The study believes that the application of blended learning in oral English class can help pupils to build up their sense of language and learn to use it in real situations.

Keywords: blended learning, primary school students, oral English

1 Introduction

In 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has stroked the world, impacting significantly on offline teaching. In response to this phenomenon, online teaching technology has grown exponentially. In the current post-epidemic period, China has put forward higher requirements for blended learning. In February 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council issued China Education Modernisation 2035, which puts forward the idea of "actively pushing forward 'Internet + Education'...and promote the high-level evolution of education informatisation from integration and application to innovation and development". It highlighted the importance of using science and technology in teaching. In recent years, many scholars have conducted research on the use of blended teaching in nursing, teaching, and college, but the number of research directed at the oral English in primary schools is relatively small. English, as an international language, is extremely important to be cultivated in early childhood. According to the theory of second language acquisition, "listening" and "speaking" appear earlier than "reading" and "writing"; Wichadee's study also shows that blended learning plays an irreplaceable role in improving proficiency and

oral communication. [2] Although the importance of oral English is gradually increasing in primary schools, the examination-based "mute English" still dominates. Most of the English classes are taught by teachers, which is rather boring. Therefore, how to provide students with interesting, implementable, and close-to-life English speaking materials and exercise their oral expression in primary school is vital. Blended learning, as a teaching mode that integrates various information technologies, has played a role in enhancing class interest and attracting students' attention.

2 Literature Review

The definition of blended learning in foreign countries has changed from the fusion teaching method proposed by Ata (2016), which can achieve the best teaching effect,[1] to the teaching model proposed by Wichadee (2017), which combines traditional teaching and new teaching technology.[2] However, such definitions are still too general, Hrastinski (2019) refined it into the mode that combined offline teaching with information technology and online teaching, reflecting more in-depth research. [3]

Differently, the definition of blended learning in China is mostly focused on the relationship between teacher and students. Li (2016) and Chen (2022) believed that blended learning provided resources for independent learning and created an information-based learning environment through technology. [6]

Wichadee (2017) found that blended learning has an enhancing effect on students' English proficiency, knowledge use, and oral communication, and can improve students' oral communication performance.[2] Sheerah (2020) revealed the role of blended learning on students' knowledge construction in English, and argued that it enhances students' flexibility in learning and has more opportunities to interact with others. Jia, Chen, and Ding (2012) used the intelligent management system Moodle to establish personalised vocabulary review and assessment, and found that such mode can improve students' test scores, especially in the mastery of English pronunciation, word spelling, and word meaning.[4] Yang, Chuang, and Li's (2013) study further showed that blended learning in English has a positive impact on learners' language perception, and enables students to perceive learning content and practice it correctly.[5] However, the design of the actual teaching model was not mentioned in the study.

In China, Zhu (2018) proposed that in the era of "Internet +", English oral teaching should be student-oriented, and use online platforms to construct blended learning.[8] Liao, Zou (2019) implemented flipped classroom, and used MOOC to construct a course applicable to the teaching of spoken English for college students. [9] However, due to students' different mastery of information technology, the polarisation of performance becomes more obvious. Li (2022) designed online self-study and flipped classroom teaching mode, using a variety of teaching resources and online courses. [10]

Therefore, this study focuses on the use of blended learning in primary school oral English class, starting from investigating the current situation of its use and making suggestions for actual primary school oral English teaching.

3 Method

In order to collect data and give out subsequent analysis, this study adopts two methods: questionnaire survey and structured interview.

3.1 Questionnaire survey

In this study, students in grades 4 to 6 of Primary School A in Hangzhou were used as the respondents.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts.

First, survey of demographic variables, including the academic level, class, and the number of English lessons per week.

Second, actual use of blended learning. A total of 11 closed-ended questions were set from three aspects: the frequency of online preview before class; the frequency of IT usage in class; whether online assignments were assigned to consolidate the use of oral speaking after class. [7]

Third, role and attitude of blended learning. In this section, there are questions on four dimensions, namely "Improvement of English proficiency, improvement of learning ability, impact of class interest and concentration, necessity and support".

3.2 Structured interviews

Three primary school English teachers were selected for interviews based on the frequency of using blended learning.

Before the interview, the purpose was briefly introduced to ensure the confidentiality of the content. The main part was divided into five dimensions: Teachers' knowledge of blended learning, the used methods, teaching effectiveness on oral English expression and learning ability, technology mastery, difficulties and suggestions, identifying the difficulties and dilemmas.

4 The Research Result

This study divides teachers' use of blended learning into three parts, and analyses the use in each part.

4.1 Pre-class application

The data from Table 1 showed that the frequency of assigning online preview was low. Combined with interviews with teachers, it's found that the use was strongly correlated with teachers' age, knowledge of the mode, and level of using information technology. The teacher of grade 4 have a shorter teaching experience but is more capable of learning new technology, while the teacher of grade 5 believes that English is learned to serve exams. She focus on grades rather than oral expression skills.

Table 1. Does your teacher assign online preview? (N=109)

Does your teacher assign online preview?	Does your teacher assign online preview?	
	Numbers	Responses in percentage
Always	15	13.76%
Often	13	11.93%
Sometimes	13	11.93%
Occasionally	16	14.67%
Never	52	47.71%

Table 2. In what way does the teacher usually ask you to finish? (N=28)

In what way does the teacher usually ask you to finish?	In what way does the teacher usually ask you to finish?	
	Numbers	Responses in percentage
Independent work	18	64.29%
Group work	2	7.14%
Blend of group and independent work	8	28.57%

The data in Table 2 shows the little attention English teachers pay to the form of cooperation in primary school. While completing independently can foster one's exploration, it is not conducive to the development of teamwork.

Table 3. Does your teacher check previews? (N=109)

Does your teacher check previews?	Does your teacher check previews?	
	Numbers	Responses in percentage
Always	12	11.01%
Often	16	14.68%
Sometimes	25	22.93%
Occasionally	20	18.35%
Never	36	33.03%

From the data in Table 3, it is known that the frequency of checking previews is not even more than half. The flipped classroom aims to cultivate students' independent learning ability and the habit of well thinking. The lack of checking assignments will lead to the preview being a mere formality, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students' self-learning habits.

4.2 In-class application

It can be seen from Table 4 that the usage of blended learning in current oral English class is low and is mainly focused on the form of courseware. The textbook-dominated teaching tends to make the class boring and reduce students' interest. However, the

overuse of blended learning techniques is not conducive to students' concentration. How to find a balance between them is an urgent point.

Table 4. Which of the following technologies has your teacher used? (N=109)

Which of the following technologies has your teacher used?	Which of the following technologies has your teacher used?	
	Numbers	Responses in percentage
Documentary video	14	12.84%
News interview	2	1.83%
English film and TV series	14	12.84%
courseware	106	97.25%
AI intelligent dialogue	3	2.75%
Live broadcast	5	4.59%
None of both	3	2.75%

4.3 After-class application

The use of online homework was also low, with nearly half (42.2%) of the teachers never assigning online oral English homework. But the sixth graders responded that their teacher always (29.4%) or frequently (26.4%) assigned after-school online homework. The sixth-grade English teacher said in the interview, "After a lesson, I usually assign online homework, such as.....I will grade the recordings.....and praise the students who use them appropriately, express fluently and pronounce them well."

5 Feasible recommendations

This study will make recommendations from the following aspects.

5.1 Pre-class

According to the constructivism learning theory, teachers should cultivate students' ability to self-construct knowledge. Based on this theory, this study integrate the asynchronous teaching method for pre-class, cultivating students' self-learning ability and constructing the knowledge system initially.

First, consulting information. Combining group and independent work to develop the ability of cooperation and independent thinking. It can exercise their logical thinking and clarify the content of the lesson to help them perform better.

Second, watching online course and completing pre-class quiz. This improves not only student's learning but also teacher's instruction. Teachers could rearrange their class by posting topics on the online software and using the correctness of the questions to capture the learning situation.

5.2 In-class

According to the students' feedback, teachers can add AI intelligent dialogue and live broadcasting on the basis of the original courseware to carry out synchronous teaching. Using the advanced technology could assist teaching and attract students' attention. The form of live broadcasting can be diversified, such as looking for native English speakers and carrying out situational simulations of the learned content; adopting live broadcasting by leading pupils into real foreign supermarkets and establish a dialogue with specific scenarios.

5.3 After-class

The teacher of grade 4 mentioned that due to the short time and large number of students, "it is difficult to give every student the opportunity to express themselves orally." Instead, "assigning some practical homework after class, which allows them to complete specific dialogues online, is also a way to use English." It can be seen that practice after class is an effective way to consolidate students' knowledge. Thus, pupils can use software to simulate more standard pronunciation by English films and dramas. They can also complete the dialogue of English audio, which can be checked by their teachers to grasp their mastery and use of oral expressions for this lesson.

5.4 Attention maintenance

When designing blended learning, teachers should reasonably control the proportion of information technology, and arrange the time and frequency of live lessons in conjunction with the students' psychological development level. This study concluded that the synchronous live teaching should be set in the second half of the class. This can re-attract students' attention and ensure the effectiveness.

6 Conclusion

Through the research, 124 pupils and 3 English teachers were collected. The aim of the research was to investigate the current use of blended learning in primary school's oral English class.

The results showed that half of the teachers never used blended learning in oral English class, and three quarters of the oral class would only use the courseware. Nearly three quarters of respondents agreed that blended learning is necessary to be used in oral English class, so it can be concluded that those pupils take a positive attitude towards the implement of such learning mode.

Through the interview with teachers, it is known that the use of blended learning is related to the age of the teacher and the mastery of information technology. Though the grades that the English teacher presented in the interview proved that blended learning can improve students' oral expression, they still stressed out the worry of distracting pupils' attention when adopting the information technology in class.

Based on these results, it is extremely important to use blended learning reasonably. As information technology can cause distraction of students' attention, teachers should control the proportion and time of using technologies such as live broadcasting when using blended learning in order to maximize the effect of blended learning on the improvement of students' oral English proficiency.

References

1. Ata R. An Exploration of Higher Education Teaching in Second Life in the Context of Blended Learning[J]. Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 2016.
2. Wichadee S. A Development of the Blended Learning Model Using Edmodo for Maximizing Students' Oral Proficiency and Motivation[J]. International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 2017: 137.
3. Hrastinski S. What Do We Mean by Blended Learning?[J]. TechTrends, 2019: 564-569.
4. Jia J, Chen Y, Ding Z, et al. Effects of a vocabulary acquisition and assessment system on students' performance in a blended learning class for English subject[J]. Computers & Education, 2012: 63-76.
5. Yang Y T C, Chuang Y C, Li L Y, et al. A blended learning environment for individualized English listening and speaking integrating critical thinking[J]. Computers & Education, 2013, 63: 285-305.
6. Li F Q. (2016) The Theoretical Basis and Instructional Design of Blending Teaching. J. Modern Educational Technology, 26(09): 18-24.
7. Xing L L. (2020) The construction and empirical research of blended teaching model based on precision teaching. J. China Educational Technology.,2020(09):135-141.
8. Zhu Q. (2018) Ecological construction of the blended teaching approach in college oral teaching at the times of the "Internet Plus". J. Journal of Heilongjiang Institute of Teacher Development.,37(03):135-137.
9. Liao G F, Zou X P. (2019) The triggering effect of optimizing teaching design on students' autonomic learning and deep learning- An action research on the blended teaching of college oral English. J. Education Research Monthly.,2019(10):105-111.
10. Li X J. (2022) A study of blended teaching mode in college oral English classroom from the perspective of POA theory. J. University Education.,2022(02):143-145.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

