

Research on Blended Teaching of College English Empowered by Digital Technology

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Abstract. The paper aims to conduct research on blended teaching of College English empowered by digital technology. Blended teaching can have the ubiquitous learning and personalized learning realized for students. What's more, the combination of online and offline learning is essential, which can largely enhance teaching efficacy and learning efficiency. In order to make the teaching process more logical and scientific, the teaching process is arranged as three phases, namely, pre-class motivating, in-class enabling and after-class assessing. College English teaching should undergo drastic innovative transformations in the modern era to cater for the needs of both teachers and students. Therefore, digital technologies should be utilized to facilitate the teaching outcomes.

Keywords: Blended Teaching, College English, Digital Technology.

1. Introduction

College English is a compulsory course for non-English major students, which takes the student-centered and teacher-guided teaching principles as the guideline. New Horizon College English (Third Edition) Reading and Writing is used as the textbook. There are three characteristics manifested in the textbook including combination of instrumental nature and humanistic nature in English language, combination of generalized learning and personalized learning in learning practice as well as combination of educational contents and tailored exercises in blended teaching.

2. Student Analysis

Targets students are non-English major students majoring in science and technology. Through questionnaire, big data analysis and student interview, the following aspects including language ability, learning motive, digital literacy, critical thinking ability, high order thinking and awareness for telling Chinese stories of target students can be manifested clearly.

2.1. Strengths of Target Students

On the one hand, students have strengths in learning. Therefore, they have the qualifications to learn the "Gold Course (Two Characteristics and One Level)".

Firstly, they have solid English foundation. As a result, it is appropriate for target students to acquire advanced knowledge of English language, which enables the high-ordered teaching.

Secondly, they have strong learning motive. As a result, it is reasonable for target students to inspire potential and face challenges courageously, which empowers the innovative teaching.

Thirdly, they have competent digital literacy. As a result, it is convenient for target students to make good use of the digital technology resources, which enlightens the challenging teaching.

2.2. Weaknesses of Target Students

On the other hand, students have weaknesses. Hence, the teacher should adopt feasible teaching methods to enhance students' learning efficiency.

Firstly, they are incompetent critical thinker. Hence, it is crucial for target students to raise consciousness and cultivate potential to think critically.

Secondly, they have unqualified high order thinking ability. Hence, it is necessary for target students to analyze, evaluate and create in solving complex problems.

Thirdly, they have insufficient awareness about telling Chinese stories in an effective manner. Hence, it is beneficial for target students to cultivate the awareness to tell Chinese stories effectively.

3. Teaching Design

Corresponding teaching design can be proposed and constructed on the basis of student analysis, which is trustworthy and workable.

3.1. Design of Teaching Principle

Based on the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) and Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA), three integrated teaching phases are constructed accordingly, which include pre-class motivating, in-class enabling and after-class assessing. The teacher makes endeavors to build “scaffolding” for students during the learning process. According to Ubiquitous Learning Theory and Constructivism Learning Theory, the online and offline blended teaching empowered by the digital and smart technology is designed in order to have the “learn, apply and assess” triad mechanism effectively realized in the teaching process.

3.2. Design of Teaching Material

Firstly, the teacher can integrate offline materials into online materials, which can broaden students’ horizon and enrich the teaching materials. Secondly, the teacher can optimize textbook usage in terms of four approaches including “select”, “reorder”, “revise” and “supplement”.

3.3. Design of Teaching Procedure

Pre-class motivating period, the teacher not only motivates students to learn with a precisely-assigned driven task but prepares the preview kit for students before class. The teacher plays the role as a guide.

In-class enabling period, the teacher adopts the question-based and task-driven teaching methods and builds the “scaffolding” for students during the learning process. The teacher plays the role as a mentor.

After-class assessing period, the teacher elaborates the integrated assessing mechanism and takes the assessing outcomes as a reliable and valuable source for future teaching practice. The teacher plays the role as an inspector.

4. Assessment Mechanism

The teacher constructs the integrated and innovative mechanism to assess comprehensively, scientifically and efficiently.

4.1. Multi-Dimensional Assessment

Four assessing dimensions are as follows.

4.1.1. Teacher Assessment

The teacher selects three sample essays and critically reviews them.

4.1.2. Peer Assessment

Students make critical comments on selected samples independently, exchange their views in pairs or groups, and have teacher-guided discussion while the teacher may offer the revised version prepared in advance.

4.1.3. Self Assessment

Students revise their products by themselves in the light of the teacher’s guided training and the corresponding rating scale provided by the teacher.

4.1.4. Automated Assessment

Students can conduct the smart learning based on the implementation of online scoring system. Students' products can be evaluated from the perspectives of grammar, accuracy, coherency and other aspects instantly.

4.2. Multi-Layered Assessment

Three assessing layers are as follows.

4.2.1. Diagnostic Assessment

The teacher conducts detailed research on the current learning foundation of students and figures out their existing unsolved problems. The teaching practice is designed based on student analysis. Therefore, each student can be taught in a tailored and individualized manner.

4.2.2. Formative Assessment

The teacher gets familiar with students' dynamic learning process in terms of routinized observation, in-class performance, daily exercise and effective communication.

4.2.3. Summative Assessment

The teacher concentrates attention on students' educational outcomes in a long-term. Specifically speaking, the teacher assesses results of final exams and mid-term exams to diagnose students' problems and figure out solutions.

4.3. Multi-Typed Assessment

Two assessing types are as follows.

4.3.1. Quantitative Assessment

The teacher utilizes mathematical methods to evaluate students' achievement of educational objectives, which can provide the supporting evidence for later teaching procedures.

4.3.2. Qualitative Assessment

The teacher focuses on the consistency of educational objectives and educational outcomes. Qualitative assessing methods are implemented to evaluate students' learning attitudes, overall qualities, internalization of moral education and other relevant aspects. The assessment of students' ideological and political education can be evaluated in terms of the rating scale proposed by Wuhan University.

5. Innovative Highlights

In order to solve students' problems and enhance their learning efficiency, innovative measures should be taken during teaching practice.

5.1. One Empowerment

Digital technologies are utilized to have the ubiquitous learning and personalized learning realized. Firstly, digital learning materials can be explored and added. Secondly, digital interactive platforms can be utilized, such as Rain Classroom, U Campus and WeChat etc. Thirdly, digital learning environment can be used like Smart Classroom. Besides, digital assessment tools can be employed like iWrite, Pigai and ERNIE Bot etc.

5.2. Two Core Principles

Student-centered principle and teacher-guided principle are adopted as the guideline in the whole teaching process.

5.3. Three Closed Loops

In order to make the teaching practice more logical and practicable, three closed loops are embodied in teaching process.

5.3.1. Teaching Practice Based on Student Analysis

Teaching objectives are based on student analysis and teaching design is carried out afterwards.

5.3.2. Learning for Applying

The teacher outputs firstly, then students can input and finally they can output the product effectively.

5.3.3. Problem-Based Teaching

The teaching practice follows the thread of “Problem-Analysis-Solution”.

5.4. Four Interrelated Blends

The teaching practice is designed with four interrelated blends. Specifically speaking, blend of both online learning and offline learning, cultivation of both instrumental nature and humanistic nature about English language, consideration of both virtual tour and real tour, utilization of both quantitative assessment and qualitative assessment.

5.5. Five Characteristics

Five characteristics are manifested in the teaching practice including structured teaching design, digital intelligent teaching, precisely-designed production, rationalized teaching strategies and diversified assessing methods.

5.6. Tear down Four Walls and Build Four Bridges

On the one hand, the teaching practice aims to tear down four walls between teaching and learning, talent cultivation and digital technology, student demand side and teacher supply side, knowledge acquisition as well as ideological and political education. On the other hand, the teaching practice aims to build four bridges between teacher and student, problem and solution, student input and student output, online learning and offline learning.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, teaching is a process of learning. College English teachers should keep pace with the development of modern technology and make innovative transformations in teaching practice. What's more, blending teaching should be constantly optimized to enhance the teaching effectiveness.

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