

The Application of Blended Learning in High School English Writing

-- Under the Guidance of Constructivist Learning Theory

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Abstract: This template explains and demonstrates how to prepare your camera-ready paper for Trans Tech Publications. The be English writing, as an important output skill in English teaching, is the embodiment of students' comprehensive language quality. However, in the high school English classroom, many teachers do not pay attention to the teaching of writing, and still adopt the product-oriented teaching mode of "assigning topics-students writing alone-correction". With the progress of science and technology, online courses have been gradually integrated into English teaching, and developed into a blended teaching mode combining online and face-to-face, which undoubtedly brings a new mode of English writing teaching, and teachers can use the form of micro classes to implement the process approach of writing for students. This paper takes the constructivist teaching theory as a guide to explore the value of the application of blended teaching in high school English writing as well as the difficulties that may be encountered in the process of its application. In addition, this paper also makes an in-depth analysis of the significance of constructivist teaching theory in English teaching, and proposes that the English writing classroom should be learner-centered, guiding students to cooperative learning, in order to promote the meaningful construction of knowledge.

Keywords: English Writing; Constructivist Learning Theory; The Process Approach.

1. Introduction

In the era of informationization, especially under the impetus of "stopping classes and not stopping learning" during the COVID-19 epidemic, online distance learning courses have developed rapidly, and many teachers have recorded many excellent online videos during the epidemic. These teaching resources also provided students with a good channel for after-school improvement and self-expansion after the outbreak, and this undoubtedly contributed to the development of Blended Learning. Even in today's post-epidemic era, the online and face-to-face Blended Learning mode has become an inevitable choice in the context of the continuous updating and development of the informationized teaching process. This mode can break the traditional teaching shackles, accelerate the development process of teaching informatization, and also improve the quality of teaching, highlight the charm of the discipline, and refine the teaching function (Chen, 2023). Along with the rise of Blended Learning, many scholars pay more attention to analyzing the learning mode under the guidance of constructivist learning theory, combining with the teaching characteristics of the English subject, exploring the significance of its intervention in English Blended Learning, trying to promote the meaningful construction of students' knowledge and the comprehensive development.

2. Literature Review

(1) Concepts

1) Blended learning

In the 1990s, with the rise of multimedia and network technology, the Internet quickly swept through many fields with its convenient and rapid characteristics. Blended teaching or Blended Learning first appeared in foreign countries in the field of training, which combines face-to-face

learning and training with digital learning and training, and combines the advantages of the two to achieve effective learning results. The Sloan Consortium in the United States conducted a study on Blended Learning and concluded that combining a certain percentage of online teaching with face-to-face classroom teaching can make Blended Learning continuously develop. In China, Prof. Huang Ronghuai (2018) gives a very representative statement: Blended Learning, as a new type of educational strategy, is driven by the Internet. The method is based on network technology, which provides knowledge support for online courses, enabling teachers and students to engage in real-time synchronous and asynchronous communication (Zhao, 2022).

Blended Learning is also called Blending Teaching, and Blending Learning is a new term based on the reflection on E-learning. As you know, the word Blending means mixing or combining, i.e. the combination of various learning styles. For example, the combination of learning by using audio-visual media (slide projection, audio-visual recording) and traditional learning by using chalk and blackboard; the combination of computer-assisted learning and traditional learning; the combination of self-directed learning and collaborative learning, etc. (He, 2004). In this paper, we mainly discuss the Blended Learning that combines the learning styles of audio-visual media with the traditional learning styles using chalkboard. In Blended Learning, it is necessary to give full play to the leading role of teachers in guiding, inspiring and monitoring the teaching process, but also to fully realize the initiative, enthusiasm and creativity of students as the main body of the learning process.

2) English Writing Ability

As an important yardstick for measuring students' comprehensive language ability, the value of writing ability goes far beyond the level of simple language presentation, which profoundly reflects the writer's level of cognition, depth of thinking, and ability of expression. Lu (2005)

eloquently defines writing ability as “a key ability to effectively convey information, express personal opinions, and promote interpersonal communication through written communication, which occupies a pivotal position in foreign language teaching.”

According to the requirements of the New English Curriculum standard, the development of high school students' English writing ability has been refined into three progressive levels: the basic level requires students to be able to accurately select appropriate types of discourse, vocabulary and grammatical structures according to the purpose of writing, and skillfully use linking words to enhance the coherence and logic of the text; the advanced level encourages students to adopt more discourse articulation skills to improve the fluency of expression, and to carefully construct chapter structures according to the purpose of writing; and the highest level encourages students to adopt more articulation skills to enhance the fluency of expression, and to carefully construct discourse structures according to the purpose of writing. At the highest level, students are expected to be able to flexibly use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence patterns, not only to accurately convey their thoughts and feelings, but also to express their unique opinions creatively and show their personalized language charm.

Therefore, the expectations of the New Curriculum for senior high school students' English writing ability are not only limited to the improvement of language accuracy, but also emphasize the depth of students' thoughts and emotions and creative expression. This process requires students to constantly sort out their thoughts, reason logically, assess the reasonableness of their opinions, and use language creatively to elaborate their positions and views in their writing practice. In view of this, the introduction of the Blended Learning mode has injected new vitality into writing teaching, which provides students with a comprehensive learning platform and promotes the overall development of their writing ability.

3) Previous Study on Cultivating English Writing Ability Through Blended Learning

In traditional English teaching, most of the classrooms focus on the completion of the content of the textbook, the teaching content serves for the examination, emphasizes on the transmission and inculcation of knowledge, and neglects the cultivation and exercise of students' ability, resulting in a teacher-centered classroom, students passively absorbing knowledge, and a lack of exertion and cultivation of their subjective initiative and creative thinking ability, which makes the teaching and learning seriously out of touch with each other. With the progress of science and technology and the introduction of the foreign concept of Blending Learning, the English Curriculum Standard for Senior Secondary Schools (Revised Edition 2022) also proposes: to give full play to the function of modern information technology in supporting and serving the teaching and learning of the English curriculum, and to encourage teachers to reasonably make use of digital technology and online teaching platforms to carry out on-line and off-line blended teaching and to satisfy the needs of students' personalized learning. Therefore, blended teaching is gradually integrated into the English classroom and is mainly based on “micro classes”, which refers to the use of video as the main carrier to record targeted teaching activities carried out by teachers of various disciplines in or outside the classroom around a certain knowledge point or teaching key points. “Micro-teaching”

has many characteristics, such as shorter teaching time (usually within 10-20 minutes), less teaching content (often important and difficult teaching points), smaller capacity of resources, easy to use resources and so on. Micro teaching is a very valuable teaching resource for both teachers and students. For teachers, micro-teaching has revolutionized the traditional teaching methods, broken through the traditional classroom mode of listening and evaluating, and is one of the important ways for teachers to grow and develop professionally; for students, micro-teaching can better meet the individual differences in students' personalized learning of knowledge points of different disciplines, on-demand choice of learning, not only for checking the shortcomings and making up for the shortcomings but also for strengthening and consolidating the knowledge, which is an important complementary and expansion resource to the traditional classroom learning. It is an important resource for supplementing and expanding traditional classroom learning. These features of micro-teaching make it especially suitable for the teaching of writing in the development of English skills, and promote the transformation of writing teaching from result-oriented to process-oriented. In the specific course arrangement, the teacher combines the advantages of digital network teaching and traditional teaching methods, combines students' independent learning with networked teaching, students check the teaching tasks and submit assignments through the network platform, as well as carry out listening and speaking training, while the teacher regulates, guides, supervises and assists the students' learning status through the teacher's platform, guides the students' learning methods and combines it with face-to-face guidance to help students learn in a timely manner, and helps them to learn through the teacher's platform. Combined with face-to-face instruction, it helps students to consolidate and improve in a competitive manner.

Moreover, some researchers at home focus on cultivating thinking quality in English writing through Blended Learning. Wu's (2014) research uncovered that various learning methods such as collaborative learning, inquiry-based approaches, online communication, and academic dialogue significantly contribute to fostering students' critical thinking skills. Consequently, she devised a Blended Learning framework that incorporated four distinct types of learning activities. Cao and Liu (2017) emphasized that in the context of Blended Learning, students' interest acts as a pivotal factor in enhancing both critical and logical thinking. They argued that the higher the learners' level of interest, the more pronounced the development of their critical thinking abilities becomes. Furthermore, Lu, Xie, Tang, and Yang (2018) addressed the evolving societal demands, emphasizing the need for Blended Learning to prioritize the cultivation of thinking skills. Taking English writing instruction as a case study, they devised a novel Blended Learning model centered on critical thinking. This model outlines the structure, procedures, and implementation conditions of Blended Learning, and through empirical research, they demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing students' critical thinking and English writing proficiency. Their findings underscored that this model surpassed traditional teaching methods in fostering students' critical thinking capabilities.

However, there are many obstacles in the practical application of blended teaching. First of all, it is difficult to change teachers' outdated teaching methods and traditional teaching concepts. In the high school English classroom,

teachers use a single teaching method, especially for the English writing classroom, many teachers still use the product-oriented method, and when students enter the senior high school, they focus on using the repetitive and mechanical method to lead students to review. The second one is the school's neglect as well as the lack of equipment. As advocates of the blended teaching model, school leaders and teaching and research staff must realize the importance of the blended teaching model and establish a comprehensive blended teaching model within the school with relevant audio-visual teaching aids, such as multimedia, micro teaching classrooms and other hardware equipment. The last point lies in the limited self-learning ability of the students themselves as well as their self-awareness. Blended teaching is a new teaching mode, which is also a great challenge for students. For students who are used to being led by teachers and are in their adolescence, how to improve their self-motivation and effectively improve their learning effect by watching micro-teaching videos is a problem that teachers need to think about.

(2) Theoretical foundations

1) Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory is a learning theory further developed on the basis of the cognitive development of children proposed by the Swiss psychologist J. Piaget, who suggested that children develop their cognitive structures by gradually constructing knowledge of the external world in the process of interacting with the surrounding environment. Constructivism is a modern learning theory that was further developed after behaviorism and cognition. It focuses on the design of learning environments and develops in the opposite direction of objectivism, with special emphasis on student learning. After the 1990s, thanks to the development of multimedia networks and communication technologies, constructivist learning theory can be widely used and developed in modern teaching. Constructivist learning theory advocates that knowledge is acquired by learners in a certain socio-cultural context, with the help of teachers and learning peers, using specific learning materials, and through the construction of meaning, rather than under the single teaching of the teacher (Cao et al., 2022). Anchor teaching that emphasizes teaching and learning contexts, scaffolding teaching that designs and provides conceptual frameworks for continuous construction, and random access teaching that teaches and learns the same content multiple times at different times and contexts are in line with the creative, cross-cutting, collaborative, and applied disciplinary characteristics of design courses. Therefore, in order to make students' meaning construction more effective, teachers should organize collaborative learning, discussion and communication as much as possible, and guide the process of collaborative learning, so that it is conducive to the development of the direction of meaning construction.

2) Blended Learning with Constructivist Theory

The constructivist learning theory advocates that students should actively construct their own knowledge system rather than just passively receiving information. Through collaborative learning, students can deepen their comprehensive understanding of knowledge in interaction, and the ultimate goal is to cultivate students' ability to solve practical problems in real situations. In this context, Blended Learning has emerged, in which teachers carefully design teaching situations close to the topic, implement differentiated teaching, ensure that every student can be

integrated into the classroom discussion, and promote effective cooperation among students. The teaching model incorporates high-quality micro-teaching video resources, which focus on key knowledge points, and students can absorb and master the knowledge points by watching these carefully selected video contents in class. Teachers then provide in-depth analysis and additional explanations based on the video content to enhance student learning. This way of presenting teaching content in the form of video not only makes traditional teaching more intuitive and vivid, but also stimulates students' interest in learning through the double stimulation of visual and auditory senses, and promotes their participation in the learning process through multi-sensory senses, so as to deepen their memories and enhance their comprehension. In addition, micro-teaching videos are short and concise (usually no more than 15 minutes), which is in line with students' concentration characteristics and helps to improve learning efficiency. The flexibility of the blended teaching mode lies in the fact that it makes full use of the intuitive nature of video resources to stimulate students' interest in learning, and strengthens the communication and cooperation between students and students as well as between teachers and students through the combination of video watching and teacher-student interaction. This kind of interaction not only increases the fun of learning, but also significantly reduces students' negative emotions and anxiety in English writing, so that they can improve their writing ability and self-confidence in a pleasant atmosphere. In summary, Blended Learning under the guidance of constructivism not only promotes communication and knowledge integration among students, but also improves their writing transfer ability, bringing new vigor and effectiveness to English writing teaching.

3. Problem Solutions

(1) Emphasis on learner-centeredness and attention to the writing process

Traditional writing instruction tends to be teacher-centered, a model that focuses on the teacher's lecturing and correcting, while relatively neglecting students' initiative and creativity in participating in the writing process. In this model, teachers are usually the transmitters of knowledge, responsible for explaining writing skills, rules and examples to students, while students mainly play the role of receivers, improving their writing skills through imitation and practice. However, this one-way teaching approach often fails to fully stimulate students' interest in writing and develop their critical thinking and creativity. Constructivist learning theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the meaningful construction of knowledge, i.e. students should construct their own knowledge system through active exploration and cooperative learning. Under the guidance of this theory, writing teaching must shift to a learner-centered approach and adopt a process writing teaching model. Process writing teaching focuses on thinking activities, strategy use and repeated revision in the writing process, aiming to help students improve their writing ability through continuous practice and reflection.

According to the theories of Wang Qiang and other experts, the teaching steps of process writing roughly include creating writing motivation, brainstorming, mind mapping, free writing, outlining, writing the first draft, editing and revising, reviewing and touching up, proofreading, and peer or teacher feedback. However, in actual classroom teaching, due to time constraints, teachers may not be able to lead students through

each step in its entirety. Also, different writing tasks and individual student differences dictate that not all steps must be used in every writing. Nonetheless, students still need to master the writing skills required for each step so that they can use them flexibly in their future writing.

To solve this problem, teachers can utilize micro-lessons, a new type of teaching resource, to assist teaching. Micro-classes are characterized by being short, concise, targeted, easy to disseminate and reusable, which are very suitable for writing skills training. Teachers can record 1-2 micro-course videos on specific writing skills according to teaching needs, so that students can learn and train independently before or after class. For example, on the day before the writing class, teachers can introduce the topic of essay writing to students in the form of micro-classes and motivate them to write through situational descriptions or other methods. In this way, students can enter the writing state more quickly in class and improve the writing efficiency. At the same time, students can also learn more information related to the writing topic through books, the Internet and other channels before class, so as to be fully prepared for writing. Another example is that after students finish the first draft and conduct peer assessment, the teacher can record a micro-lesson video on how to conduct self-assessment and writing embellishment to share with students. In this way, students can further improve the quality of their compositions by self-reflecting and revising according to the instructions in the video after class. On the next day, teachers can compare and contrast students' revision results, recognizing students' progress and pointing out what still needs to be improved.

With the aid of micro-teaching, teachers can not only teach writing skills more efficiently within the limited classroom time, but also stimulate students' interest and initiative in learning and promote the overall improvement of their writing ability.

(2) Complete the construction of meaning in knowledge and promote cooperative learning

Cooperative learning, as a core element in constructivist learning theory, emphasizes interaction, collaboration and sharing among students, which runs through the whole learning process and aims to promote the development of students' active learning, critical thinking and creativity. In writing teaching, cooperative learning can not only enhance students' writing ability, but also cultivate their teamwork spirit and communication skills.

First of all, teachers can skillfully integrate the explanation of writing materials into micro classes, not only imparting knowledge, but more importantly teaching students how to independently collect and organize relevant information and build their own knowledge network. Micro classes can be used as a guiding tool to provide students with the necessary background knowledge and links to resources, while instructing them how to effectively sift, analyze and integrate the information, so as to be fully prepared for writing.

After class, students can take the initiative to collect materials related to the writing topic and carry out preliminary processing and organization according to the guidance of the micro classes. In this way, when they start discussions and debates in class in small groups, they can make fuller use of these materials for in-depth exchanges and collisions. In group discussions, each student can share his or her own views and findings while listening to others' opinions, thus stimulating more inspiration and creativity. Through brainstorming, different ideas among group members collide

with each other and can produce richer and more diversified writing content.

Cooperative learning also plays an important role in the evaluation after writing. Teachers can first introduce the standards and methods of essay evaluation to students through the form of micro classes to help them clarify the direction and focus of evaluation. Then, students are encouraged to bring home the compositions of their peers or group members for online mutual evaluation activities. In this process, students can read each other's compositions, discover the strengths and weaknesses in them, and discuss and exchange them. They can circulate and share well-written sentences or paragraphs to learn from others' strengths; at the same time, they can also ask questions and discuss problems in their essays and seek help from teachers or classmates. This kind of mutual evaluation activity not only promotes students' mutual learning and borrowing, but also enhances their critical thinking and appreciation.

Eventually, through the communication and interaction between teachers and students and students and students, students are able to understand the evaluation criteria and writing skills of essays in a deeper way, and realize the meaningful construction and internalization of knowledge. At the same time, this cooperative learning approach can also cultivate students' teamwork spirit and communication skills, laying a solid foundation for their future learning and life.

(3) Designing Appropriate Classroom Activities

English writing, as a pivotal output activity, necessitates not only linguistic proficiency but also the cultivation of logical reasoning, critical thinking, and creative expression. These skills are vital for students' academic and personal development, as they enhance problem-solving abilities, foster independent learning, and promote clear and persuasive communication. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in designing activities that effectively nurture students' thinking quality through English writing. One effective strategy is to engage students in analyzing and assessing writing samples and their peers' work. By examining model essays or their classmates' compositions, students learn to identify strengths and weaknesses, fostering critical analysis skills. They can discuss sentence structure, coherence, vocabulary choices, and logical flow, which encourages them to reflect on their own writing practices and identify areas for improvement. Another activity that promotes organized thinking is creating mind maps for writing organization. Mind mapping encourages students to brainstorm ideas, visually organizing them into related categories and subcategories. This approach helps students develop a clear outline for their essays, ensuring a logical progression of thoughts from introduction to conclusion.

To refine language use, teachers can guide students in transforming words into simple sentences and then expanding those sentences into more complex structures. This exercise not only strengthens grammatical knowledge but also fosters creativity and fluency in expression. Students learn to add descriptive details, use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and vary sentence types, making their writing more engaging and sophisticated. Sorting out and summarizing useful sentences and cohesive words is another valuable activity. By compiling a bank of effective phrases and words that facilitate transitions, comparisons, and elaborations, students can enhance the coherence and readability of their writing. This practice encourages students to be mindful of how language works to connect ideas and

maintain a smooth narrative flow.

As teachers, we should embrace a diverse range of activities that actively engage students in developing their thinking quality through English writing. From analyzing and assessing writing samples to brainstorming and mind mapping, these activities equip students with the skills they need to produce coherent, insightful, and creative written work.

4. Conclusion

The application of Blended Learning Model in high school English writing teaching is gradually showing its unique advantages and potentials, and has become an important force in promoting the reform and innovation of English teaching. This teaching model skillfully integrates the advantages of traditional classroom teaching and digital online learning, aiming to comprehensively improve students' English writing ability and comprehensive language use ability through diversified learning environments and flexible teaching strategies. The core of blended teaching mode lies in the word "blended", which not only refers to the combination of physical space and virtual space, but also the in-depth integration of teaching concepts, teaching resources, teaching methods and assessment methods. It emphasizes learner-centeredness, and allows students to switch freely between different learning scenarios through teachers' careful design and guidance, so as to realize personalized learning and in-depth learning. In the field of high school English writing, the blended teaching mode can provide students with rich writing resources, immediate feedback mechanisms and diversified communication platforms, so as to stimulate their interest in writing and improve their writing skills. The constructivist learning theory emphasizes the learner's initiative and participation, and believes that learning is a process of actively constructing a knowledge system. In the mixed teaching mode, this theory is given a new practical meaning. Teachers encourage students to actively participate in the English writing process by designing contextualized learning tasks, carrying out group cooperative inquiry activities, and using online resources to guide students' independent learning, so as to actively explore the laws of the language and construct their own knowledge system of writing. This way of learning not only helps to improve students' writing ability, but also develops their critical thinking, innovative thinking and cooperative ability. Therefore, under the guidance of constructivism, we should adopt the process writing teaching method to improve students' English writing ability. Process writing pedagogy is one of the specific ways of practicing mixed teaching mode in high school English writing. It emphasizes that writing is a cyclical and continuous improvement process, including the stages of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Under the blended teaching mode, teachers can utilize online platforms or tools, such as writing software, blogs, forums, etc., to provide students with support services such as writing instruction, example display, and peer assessment. Students, on the other hand, can freely express their views, exchange ideas and learn from each other on these platforms, and gradually improve their writing skills through continuous practice and reflection.

However, despite the many advantages of the blended teaching model in high school English writing, its promotion and implementation still face many challenges. On the subjective side, some teachers may lack relevant

technological literacy and teaching experience, making it difficult for them to effectively integrate online and offline resources, while students may find it difficult to adapt to this mode of teaching due to their lack of independent learning ability. On the objective side, issues such as technical equipment, network conditions and uneven distribution of teaching resources may also be constraints. In order to overcome these challenges, education departments and schools should take the following measures: first, strengthen teacher training to enhance teachers' technical skills and teaching concepts; second, improve infrastructure construction to ensure that teachers and students can use online learning platforms smoothly; third, enrich teaching resources and provide diversified learning materials and tools; fourth, establish a scientific assessment system, pay attention to the learning process and results of the students, and give timely and effective feedback and guidance; fifth, set up scientific assessment systems, pay attention to the learning process and results of students, and give timely and effective feedback and guidance; fifth, set up scientific evaluation systems, and give timely and effective feedback and guidance. Fourth, establish a scientific assessment system, pay attention to students' learning process and results, and give timely and effective feedback and guidance; fifth, strengthen cooperation between home and school, and jointly create a good learning environment to promote the overall development of students.

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