

A Study on the Application of Blended Learning in English Reading Courses at Local Applied Colleges

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Abstract: With the rapid advancement of information technology, digital education has emerged as a crucial trend in educational reform. This paper combines specific cases to analyze the design and implementation of blended learning in English reading courses. Additionally, it explores the significant role of digital teaching in enhancing teaching quality, cultivating student critical thinking, and fostering educational innovation. Through this study, the author hopes to provide guidance and inspiration for the English teaching practices in local applied colleges in China.

Keywords: Blended learning; English reading; Local applied colleges

Introduction:

In today's education landscape, rapid advancements in global technology are reshaping traditional teaching methods, presenting both challenges and opportunities. For English teaching in local applied colleges, the reading course is crucial for improving students' language skills and cross-cultural awareness. Therefore, it's necessary to integrate digital tools effectively to enhance teaching methods and ensure better learning outcomes. This requires exploring new teaching strategies and technologies to deliver high-quality education that meets students' needs in the digital era.

1. Theoretical Basis of Blended Learning

Blended learning, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning, draws upon a rich theoretical foundation rooted in diverse pedagogical theories and frameworks. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) propose the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model, which identifies the critical elements of social, cognitive, and teaching presence necessary for effective learning in blended environments. This model emphasizes the importance of fostering an engaging online community where learners actively interact with each other and with the course content.

In parallel, Salmon's Five-Stage Model (2000) highlights the significance of online facilitation and interaction in nurturing collaborative learning experiences. This framework outlines a structured approach to online learning, guiding learners through stages of access and motivation, online socialization, information exchange, knowledge construction, and development.

Additionally, the Constructivist Theory, advocated by Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978), underscores the learner's active role in knowledge construction through meaningful engagement and social interaction. According to this theory, learning is a process of constructing meaning based on prior knowledge and experiences, facilitated by interactions with peers, instructors, and learning resources.

These theoretical underpinnings inform the design and implementation of blended learning initiatives, emphasizing the seamless integration of face-to-face instruction with digital tools and resources. By leveraging technology to enhance collaboration, engagement, and personalized learning experiences, blended learning optimizes learning outcomes and prepares students for success in the digital age. In the course of English reading, the blended learning is expected to provide students with more diversified learning experience and stimulate their learning interest and initiative.

2. The Application of Blended Learning in English Reading Courses

Currently, blended learning is increasingly being applied in English reading courses at colleges in China. This approach combines

traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning components to enhance students' reading skills and comprehension. In these courses, online platforms and digital resources are utilized to provide students with access to a wide range of reading materials, including articles, essays, and multimedia content. Additionally, interactive exercises, quizzes, and discussion forums are integrated into the online component to promote active engagement and collaborative learning among students. Furthermore, instructors utilize learning management systems to track students' progress, provide feedback, and facilitate communication outside of the classroom. Blended learning in English reading courses offers students greater flexibility in accessing course materials and studying at their own pace, while also fostering critical thinking and analytical skills through online discussions and activities. Overall, the application of blended learning in English reading courses in Chinese colleges enhances the learning experience and improves students' reading proficiency.

3. The Design and Implementation of Blended Learning in English Reading Course at Local Applied Colleges

The school where the author works is a local applied college. This kind of colleges and universities are characterized by application-oriented disciplines and application-oriented majors. They are committed to serving the development of local industries and have established a system of application-oriented personnel training, which plays an important role in promoting local economic development, technological innovation and social services. Therefore, the cultivation of undergraduates in local applied colleges and universities also adheres to the principles mentioned above. In English curriculum design, teachers aim to enhance students' English proficiency and cultivate their awareness and skills in intercultural communication, enabling them to effectively use English in social interactions and future work, thus to meet the needs of the society and individual development. In this case, an efficient model of blended learning is undoubtedly an excellent choice for English reading courses. Specifically, in the school where the author works, we have designed the blended learning of the English reading course as follows:

4. The Construction of Online Learning Platform

Firstly, we constructed and utilized a great online learning platform named Superstar Learning Network. This platform served as the central hub for students to access English reading materials and engage in in-class and extracurricular interactions. After determining the teaching objectives and contents of the English reading course, teachers will log in to the Super Star Learning platform with teacher accounts, create an online learning space for English reading courses on the Superstar Learning Network platform, and upload the prepared teaching resources to the course page, including courseware, reading material, videos, audios and exercises, etc. Then, according to the course content and teaching plan, the teacher will set up the chapter structure and learning path of the course to ensure that students can learn in a logical sequence. After the completion of the course construction, the teacher will publish the course on this platform, so that students can access and participate in learning.

5. The Use of Multimedia Resources

The use of online learning platform makes it possible to teach with rich multimedia resources. The integration of multimedia resources provides students with access to a diverse range of reading materials, enriching their learning experience. For instance, library databases offer an extensive collection of academic articles, research papers, and literary texts, allowing students to explore various topics and genres. Moreover, online journals offer up-to-date information and perspectives on literary analysis, language studies, and cultural insights. In addition, videos related to English reading courses play a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding of the reading materials. These videos can cover a wide array of topics, including the background of literary works, biographies of authors, historical contexts, and thematic analyses. By watching these videos, students gain valuable insights into the cultural, social, and historical dimensions of the texts they are studying. For example, a video discussing the historical events that influenced a particular literary period or the life experiences of a renowned author can deepen students' comprehension and appreciation of the assigned readings.

6. Online Discussion and Collaborative Learning

Teachers will create a special discussion board on the online reading course space, and will post a discussion related to the topic of each unit per week. Students are required to participate in the discussion and reply to classmates' posts within a specified time. This form can promote the communication and collision of ideas between students and cultivate their critical thinking ability. In addition, teachers will divide the students into groups, and each group will be responsible for a cooperative learning project. These projects can include textual analysis, literary work research, thematic exploration, etc. Students work together in groups to research, discuss, and ultimately submit collaborative results. This way can not only improve students' cooperation ability, but also dig deep into the connotation and meaning of the reading text.

7. Real-time Feedback and Evaluation

The teacher will set up quizzes and assignments for the English reading course on the online learning platform. These quizzes and assignments can include multiple choice questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, essay questions, etc. Some questions are marked automatically, so students can constantly assess themselves as they learn the course. With the annotation and comment function of the online learning platform, teachers can give real-time feedback on unit exercises or reading reports submitted by students. Teachers can point out students' strengths and weaknesses and offer suggestions to help students improve their reading and writing skills, even out of the classroom. Besides, online learning platforms can support real-time interactive classroom activities such as online discussions, voting, group cooperation, etc. Through these activities, teachers can timely understand students' learning situation and problems, adjust teaching strategies, and provide targeted guidance and support.

8. Supplementary of Face-to-face Teaching

The supplement of face-to-face teaching is the clever combination of online learning platform content and traditional face-to-face teaching. In class, teachers can carry out more in-depth teaching activities, such as discussion, case analysis or practical activities, which helps to strengthen students' understanding and application of English reading materials. Through classroom interaction, students can ask questions and express their views to teachers more directly, and teachers can also answer questions and guide learning in time, so as to promote students' in-depth thinking and interactive communication. In addition, face-to-face teaching can stimulate students' learning interest and participation through various ways such as teachers' voice and body language, so as to make English reading class more lively and interesting. Therefore, this blended learning model expands teaching methods and enhances teaching effectiveness. It offers students a richer and deeper learning experience, fostering comprehensive literacy and independent learning abilities.

9. The Effectiveness of Blended Learning in English Reading Courses

Through in-depth field observations, it has been revealed that the blended learning approach significantly impacts the learning outcomes of students at local applied universities. Firstly, students can access a diverse range of reading resources, including texts, audio, and video materials, through online learning platforms. This provides them with a broader learning space and a more diversified learning experience compared to traditional printed materials. It is obvious that students' interest in English reading and their learning efficiency of English reading course are enhanced in author's college.

Secondly, the blended learning model encourages students to study independently on the online learning platform, choose learning resources, arrange time and learning methods independently. In this way, students' autonomous learning ability and information acquisition ability are cultivated.

Finally, the training goals of undergraduates in applied colleges include improving students' English application ability and cross-cultural communication ability. The blended learning model introduces practical teaching activities, such as case analysis in reading materials, project design after reading, etc., to help students apply what they have learned to practical scenarios and improve their practical operation ability and problem-solving ability. Therefore, the blended learning model of English reading course aligns perfectly with the training objectives of our college for applied talents.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the study on the application of blended learning model in the English reading course in local applied college has achieved positive results, which provides new ideas and practical experience for the reform of education and teaching. In the future, we will continuously optimize the design and implementation of blended learning model, so as to improve teaching effect and promote the progress of English education in local applied colleges and universities.

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