

A Brief Analysis of High School English Reading Teaching via a Blended Learning Approach

Xingwei Wu

School of Foreign Languages, West China Normal University, Nan Chong, China

Abstract

At present, with the spurt of information technology such as artificial intelligence and promulgation of China's relevant information technology documents, the degree of information technology in education is constantly being promoted. The online and offline blended teaching mode provides a new path for the practice of English teaching informatization. The purpose of this paper is to explore the application of blended teaching in high school English reading courses via blended teaching, combined with specific teaching case.

Keywords

Blended Learning, Blended Learning, High School English, Teaching Reading, Subject Core competence.

1. Introduction

1.1. Formulating the question

Information technology has greatly advanced contemporary education reform. The National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Outline promulgated in 2010 clearly states: "Information technology has a revolutionary impact on education development and must be given high priority." This has led to the development of new teaching models such as "Internet+", MOOC, flipped classroom, micro-lesson, CALL, etc., which have triggered a research boom and become a new research hot spot for scholars, promoting the deep development of information technology in education.

The Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan promulgated by the Ministry of Education in 2018 proposed to promote "a shift from enhancing teachers' and students' IT application capabilities to comprehensively improving their information literacy". This plan marks a new stage in the construction of education informatization in China.

Nevertheless, there has been little research conducted on the application of blended teaching in high school reading courses. In view of this, the present study aims to explore the feasibility of blended teaching in high school English reading courses, with a perspective to providing more inspirations for the updating of high school reading teaching.

1.2. Purpose and significance of the study

1.2.1. Purpose of the research: Sorting out the connotation of blended learning

Clarifying the formulation of the concept is a prerequisite for understanding it. Scholars at home and abroad have different views on the formulation of blended teaching and learning. Copious domestic scholars call it blended teaching and learning (Diao & Liu, 2021; Li, 2021; Feng & Wang, 2019), while the common expression in international academic journals is Blended Language Learning (BLL), which focuses on the blending of online and offline student learning activities (Hu, 2021). According to the author, the difference between blended teaching and blended learning reflects the different focus of domestic and international research. Domestic research mostly emphasizes how to use blended teaching to support teachers'

teaching, while foreign research focuses more on using blended teaching to support students' learning (Feng & Wang, 2019).

Scholars Feng et al., (2018) have defined the connotation of blended teaching into three periods, namely the three stages of technology application, technology integration and "Internet+". In the first stage, Professor He (2004) claimed that the so-called blended teaching is to combine the advantages of traditional learning methods with those of digital or networked learning. The Sloan Consortium defines blended learning as "a combination of face-to-face and online teaching and learning". In other words, it combines a certain proportion of online teaching and face-to-face teaching in the teaching content" (Bonk et al., 2009; Allen & Seaman, 2002-2003). In the second stage, Sloan Consortium first updated its definition of blended learning, specifying that only "30%-79% of the content is taught online" can be called blended learning. Some domestic scholars highlighted the idea of "student-centredness", such as the five "appropriate" ones proposed by Jin et al., (2013), the core of blended teaching is to teach at an "appropriate" learning techniques for "appropriate" people at "appropriate" times and the delivery of "appropriate" skills to accommodate "appropriate" learning styles "The 'appropriate' skills to optimize academic achievement in relation to learning objectives. This definition is the most representative one during this period (Zhou & Jia, 2023).

To summarize, the first stage is a vague period in which scholars tend to superficially combine the advantages of online and offline teaching, without involving both teachers and students, and without specifying the form of teaching. In the second stage, scholars' interpretations of blended learning have risen to the physical level: specifying the proportion of online and offline delivery. That means scholars at home and abroad defined blended learning in a more specific and explicit way. In the "Internet+" phase, more scholars pointed out that blended learning is not simply a mixture of technologies, but a truly participatory and personalized learning experience for students (Smith, 2017; Horn & Stecker, 2015). This suggests that the concern of blended learning and teaching is gradually shifting from technology to support for teaching and learning, concentrating on student learning and teacher teaching.

1.2.2. Significance of the study

In terms of the current situation of domestic research, taking CNKI as an example, the author used "English blended teaching" and "high school English blended teaching" as the subject terms, the source type was limited to "Peking University Core" and "CSSCI", and 141 papers published between 2018 and 2023 were selected. Via reading the above papers, the following findings were found: first of all, the research subjects are mostly university students, rarely involving high school students, among which only two core papers (Guo, 2018 & Zhang et al., 2019) with "high school English blended teaching" as the subject term, indicating that high-quality research on high school blended teaching is still scarce. Secondly, the field of research come from various majors in universities, such as water conservancy (Gong, 2022), plastics (Wang, 2022), agricultural tourism (Yan, 2023), and other blended teaching research in some higher vocational schools (Ma, 2020 & Chen, 2021). However, few studies concerning the application of blended reading classroom in high school English.

In view of the above, the paper attempt to explore blended teaching in English reading classes, using specific teaching cases as clues, in order to bring some insights to front-line teachers.

2. Problem Identification

Admittedly, traditional reading lessons unequivocally have varying degrees of problems. There is still much room for improvement in the teaching of reading.

2.1. For teachers

Firstly, traditional reading lessons rarely organize feedback part. Some teachers even have the phenomenon of using a template for their lessons. This can be seen in pre-reading introduction, relies too much on asking questions but lacks a multi-modal introduction (via videos, songs, recordings). Secondly, the teacher-student interaction during the lesson does not reach to every student. Finally, the written and oral tasks were unevenly arranged, with the amount of written tasks far exceeding the oral tasks and a lack of creative tasks.

2.2. For students

Firstly, a large number of vocabulary hinder a flow reading, which affects the pleasure of reading for less active students. Secondly, students are afraid to interact with teacher in the reading class.

In the author's opinion, it is imperative to integrate information technology and traditional classroom. Due to online teaching has irreplaceable advantages in making up for the shortcomings of traditional offline teaching.

3. Problem Solutions

The following is a complete case study of teaching reading in Unit 2 The Well that Changed the World in Senior English Book3 (2019 edition), analyzing how to carry out blended approach in a reading course and to explore its feasibility.

3.1. Teaching Objectives and Teaching Priorities

3.1.1. Teaching objectives

(1) Language ability object:

Students can master the key words and phrases: Canadian, kilometer, neighbour, hand pump, foundation, determine, insight, delight, perseverance, reality, look across, turn out to be, make a difference, break into, benefit from, etc.

(2) Learning ability object:

Students can obtain and integrate information from the article and retell it

(3) Thinking qualities object:

Students can understand the reasons why Ryan help Africans to build a well and learn from Ryan's good qualities like perseverance and courage.

(4) cultural awareness object:

Based on the current situation in water-scarce countries, groups work together to conceptualize programmes to help water-scarce or poor countries online, increase empathy for people in other countries and cultivate a quality of being kind.

3.1.2. Teaching priorities

Key point:

To understand the main idea of the text, grasping detailed information and correctly describing the structure of the text

Difficult point:

To develop a sense of reverence for the protagonist's kindness, courage, resilience and great strength of action and organization, imitating the main character to help specific people and countries.

3.2. Teaching procedure

3.2.1. Pre-reading

Teachers posted pre-study task on the Super Star Learning Platform: students are allowed to browse news about water and electricity shortages in some places and fill in the online quiz

Table 1. Online quiz

What' your feeling through bruising these news?
What confused you most?
What do you want to know more?

3.2.2. In-class learning

Firstly, teacher show students pictures of water shortage status in African countries and ask open-ended questions: Why is there such a shortage of water? Do you want to help them?

Secondly, offline teaching presents, let students complete a small test on word collocation, report the errors in groups in writing, then the teacher will show and explain these vocabulary in the form of mind maps, word blocks, e.g. the word Canadian, to inspire students with a picture of the "Great Lakes of Canada" first, then invite them to guess in which country. Next explain the suffix "ian", and finally present "Canadian" and use the mind map to show similar vocabulary (Australian, Asian, historian, etc.). Thirdly, teacher asks questions for students to quickly grab (speak in the comments section or raise their hands on the Tencent conference platform). Fourthly, students are allowed to read the article carefully, to discuss the main idea of this passage in groups, then to report text summary in class orally.

3.2.3. Post-lesson feedback

The teacher organizes an activity in which groups work together to come up with practical solutions that are different from those in the text. Teacher will evaluate and reward the excellent work, then incorporate their works to the personal portfolios.

3.2.4. Problem solving

In terms of the teacher side, firstly, in the vocabulary teaching part, the previous direct explanation of meanings was changed to include a multi-modal presentation and supplemented with knowledge of affixes, which improved the attractiveness and efficiency of the vocabulary teaching. Secondly, concerning classroom tasks, teachers are flexible in assigning oral tasks, written tasks and combining online tools to make tasks more personalized across time and space. Finally, novel post-class assignments such as group activities and scheme design have been added, which students are more interested in and willing to complete more seriously.

In terms of student side, firstly, the interaction on the online platform reduces students' fear of the classroom and the teacher and allows them to communicate more actively than in a traditional classroom where students and teachers interact face-to-face. Secondly, the introduction to the course, where the teacher teaches vocabulary in a multi-modal presentation, is certainly a more accessible way for less successful students, improved their reading outcomes.

4. Conclusion

Blended teaching is one representative form of English teaching in the information age. The present study firstly systematically analyses the connotation of blended teaching, then proposes the application of blended teaching for high school English reading teaching and presents it with a complete case study. However, there are still many shortcomings in the paper. For the

first, the literature is only searched on CNKI and the number of databases searched is relatively small. Secondly, the present study experimented only with reading courses. Future research could extend databases in international core journals and develop empirical studies from other lesson types.

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