An Exploration of Blended Teaching Model for College English Vocabulary Based on the "VocabGo" Platform

Yaqin Lu

Lecturer, Beijing Institute of Petrochemical Technology, China.

E-mail: luyaqin@bipt.edu.cn.

Abstract. With the rapid development of information technology in foreign language teaching, the blended teaching model that integrates online learning with offline classrooms has become the typical trend of college English teaching. Based on the analysis of the existing problems in vocabulary learning in current traditional teaching and the platform of "VocabGo", this study explores a blended teaching model that includes vocabulary preview before class, vocabulary testing during class, and consolidation and improvement after class. This model expands the content of vocabulary teaching, emphasizes student-centeredness, and is conducive to the cultivation of students' learning interest and self-learning ability, which has significant practical implications for the reform of college English teaching.

Keywords: College English Vocabulary, Blended Teaching, VocabGo.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays an important role in English learning and is the foundation of language learning. The amount of vocabulary largely determines the success or failure of language learning. If the vocabulary is lacking, it will be difficult to improve English proficiency, even if you have certain listening, speaking, reading and writing skills or translation skills. In traditional college English teaching, vocabulary teaching is often too monotonous and boring, and the learning process is too rigid, lacks flexibility, resulting in unsatisfactory learning outcomes of English vocabulary.

Today, the era of informatization and intelligence has provided a new teaching method, learning method, and unprecedented rich resources for foreign language teaching. The "College English Course Teaching Guide" revised by the Ministry of Education in 2020 also pointed out that colleges and universities should make full use of modern information technology, actively create a diverse teaching and learning environment, use high-quality online educational resources to improve and expand teaching content, implement a blended teaching model, so that the teaching model enables students to develop in the direction of active learning, independent learning and personalized learning.

Therefore, under the trend of rapid development of educational informatization reform, teachers need to update their teaching concepts, adopt advanced teaching methods and means, fully apply information technology to teaching practice, create high-quality and efficient classrooms, improve teaching effects and student learning efficiency. In a word, information technology should serve education and teaching.

For the engineering college where the researcher works, with the reduction of class hours and the relatively weak English foundation of students, students are faced with insufficient initiative in English learning and insufficient self-planning of English learning, so it is difficult for students to maintain their interest in learning for a long time, especially, for the students who have weak willpower can easily give up halfway. Therefore, faced with such situation, the issue on how teachers guide students to effectively apply the advantages of the network and

construct a scientific and reasonable college English vocabulary learning model has become an urgent one. This study, based on the theory of blended learning and the "VocabGo" platform, explores a blended vocabulary teaching model, aiming to improve the vocabulary learning ability of college English learners and their learning autonomy.

Blended Learning

The concept of blended teaching was first proposed by foreign training institutions. Professor Margaret Driscoll believes that blended learning refers to the blending of various network technologies to achieve educational goals (Jiehui, 2021). In China, the first person to propose blended teaching was Professor He Kekang who believes that blended teaching refers to the "deep integration of information technology with various courses", which constructs a new teaching structure with the teacher as the "leader" and the student as the "subject" and makes full use of the advantages of both "student-centered" and "teacher-led" teaching methods (Kekang, 2004). It advocates the deep integration of information technology into the teaching of various subjects according to the characteristics of each country in order to create an "ideal teaching environment" for students to achieve the ultimate goal of cultivating innovative talents. Ronghuai and Martin (2009) advocate that, in fact, blended teaching is the organic integration of face-to-face classroom learning and digital learning. In a word, blended teaching is a kind of "online" + "offline" teaching that combines the advantages of online teaching and traditional teaching. Online is a platform for students to learn independently. Teachers set up resources to cover and extend the key and difficult points of the teaching content. Offline activities are traditional classes well designed by teachers, organizing students to consolidate and flexibly apply the basic knowledge learned online. By applying these activities, the content that students learned online can be deepened and internalized. This new teaching model emphasizes the teaching concept of "student-centered", which can not only supervise students' classroom learning but also cultivate students' independent learning abilities to meet the needs of personalized learning.

The Introduction of "VocabGo"

The "VocabGo" English vocabulary smart learning platform is an online vocabulary learning tool launched by the Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press in 2018. The platform uses WeChat public account as the entrance and has established a vocabulary corpus that matches English textbooks. It dynamically generates various vocabulary exercises for each learner. The exercises include diverse types of questions, including word selection and matching, listening to sound and meanings,

sentence selection, word spelling, etc. These exercises, generated dynamically from the corpus, are ranged from simple to complex, allowing learners to repeatedly observe and compare the usage of words in different contexts, which also avoids mechanical memorization and repeated questions. Learners can deepen their understanding of words and consolidate their learning results through these multiple exercises. The diversified and step-by-step design makes up for the defect of some other vocabulary study software that only focuses on monotonous word meaning exercises.

In the platform, teachers can set up cloud teaching classes, combine the teaching content to assign word learning and test tasks corresponding to the texts they learn, set different levels of exercises and test forms for different students according to the different stages of pre-class, in-class, and after-class. After the students complete these exercises and tests, the teacher can know the completion situation and score ranking. "VocabGo" also has the function of organizing word competitions. School administrators can organize and carry out competition activities through the "management terminal" so as to fully grasp the English learning situation of all students in the school and obtain first-hand data on students' vocabulary learning and thus facilitate teaching research purposefully.

Problems in Traditional College English Vocabulary Teaching

Insufficient emphasis on English vocabulary teaching

Due to the large amount of professional course content at the university level, some schools attach great importance to the cultivation of students' professional abilities. Therefore, to some extent, the important position of English courses is neglected, and the learning time of English courses is compressed, which results in limited teaching time and relatively heavy teaching content. Therefore, some teachers have to assign vocabulary learning task to students after class, so that students do not take up class time and complete the recitation of words by themselves after class. As a result, some students do not pay sufficient attention to vocabulary learning and are even unwilling to complete the recitation of words on their own.

On the other hand, although some teachers explain some key words in class, the traditional English vocabulary teaching method is monotonous and the teaching content is also boring, which cannot arouse students' learning interest, and even makes students suffer from bad habits for a long time. The dull learning environment may even lead to rigid thinking, that is, students lack a deep understanding of words and cannot use words flexibly. But the important purpose of learning English well is to guide students to apply their knowledge flexibly in practice, this traditional English vocabulary teaching method has fallen behind and must be reformed (Guanghui, 2016).

The lack of good learning methods

In addition to the influence of traditional teaching methods, there are certain problems in students' own learning methods. First, because they have not mastered the rules and habits of English learning, they have poor initiative in vocabulary accumulation and do not attach great importance to vocabulary learning, so it is difficult for them to complete the set vocabulary accumulation task. Secondly, in the process of reciting English words, students often learn for utilitarian purposes. Many words are recited solely to cope with exams, which will cause students not to pay attention to vocabulary accumulation daily. They often carry out cramming study before the exam, and after the exam, the previously memorized words are quickly forgotten. Thirdly, students' accumulation of vocabulary is not appropriate. Today, there are still many students who do not realize the importance of daily English vocabulary accumulation. During the learning process, the way of memorizing words is too rigid and mechanical, which cannot achieve the expected results and then forms a vicious cycle of learning methods. After persisting in such kind of study for a period of time, they cannot experience the sense of achievement and the results of learning, and then they may just give up, so the lack of the sense of achievement will greatly affect students' enthusiasm for learning, and even affect students' positive attitude towards the learning of the entire English subject. Therefore, because many students do not have good learning habits and lack self-discipline, they have slow speed of mastering new vocabulary and low efficiency in vocabulary study. In addition, because of students' different learning initiative, the gap among them will gradually be obvious too.

The inflexibility of students' vocabulary application

The reason why students learn English vocabulary is to apply it flexibly in English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, that is, they can accurately hear out certain English words, accurately pronounce the words, use these English words flexibly for communication, and to write beautiful articles. However, when most students learn English vocabulary, they just focus on the accumulation of English vocabulary, and do not pay attention to the effective application of English vocabulary. This phenomenon is particularly typical in listening and dictation. For many words that students usually have recited in daily study, when students hear their pronunciation, it is difficult for students to react and spell them correctly in the limited time. For example, in one listening test, for words like "remarkable", "incredible" that students are supposed to be very familiar with, a considerable number of the students cannot spell them correctly. Later, interviews revealed that when students heard the pronunciation in the process of dictation, they could not respond to the word in time

according to their pronunciation, and they did not realize them until they saw the correct answer, so their usual reaction to see those words is "*Oh, that words, I know them, but I didn't recall them when I listened to them.*"

The Exploration of the Blended Teaching Model for College English Vocabulary Based on the "Vocabgo" Platform

The "VocabGo" platform, with WeChat public account as the entrance, has a built-in vocabulary corpus that matches English textbooks. Teachers can set up cloud classes on the "VocabGo" platform, assign word learning and testing tasks according to the teaching content, and design different exercises and tests for students at different levels for different teaching stages of pre-class, in-class, and after-class. After students complete these exercises and tests, the teachers can assess their performance and make corresponding evaluations for students' work, which is helpful for teachers to make effective preparation for the lesson. So, it is effective and important to introduce the "VocabGo" platform into the blended teaching class of college English vocabulary and cover the teaching stages of before class, during class and after class. To be exact, pre-class arrangement and supervision, in-class quizzes, and post-class vocabulary consolidation activities provide all-round data support for the teaching, lay the foundation for the implementation of the flipped classroom in class and also provide a platform for the internalization and consolidation of knowledge after class.

Before class – "VocabGo" platform assists vocabulary preview

Based on the "VocabGo" learning platform, teachers can assign word learning tasks that match the textbook for students to learn before class, so that students can make enough preparation for the implementation of the flipped classroom in class and thus improve their autonomous learning. The learning exercises that teachers design before class usually are ranged from the easiest to the relative difficult to meet students' needs at different levels. For students, these various vocabulary exercises are dynamically generated, driving them to learn and compare word usages at different contexts again and again. Repeatedly practicing the meaning and collocation of words at different contexts can help them master these words and also make progress in their listening, grammar and reading skills. For teachers, after the students complete the learning task, they can check students' assignment and make evaluation on them. And based on the evaluation, teachers can prepare for their lesson purposefully and modify the way of teaching to suit the special requirements of each student, which provides a

strong guarantee for students' classroom efficiency and lays the foundation for the selection of teaching content in flipped classroom.

During class - "VocabGo" platform assists classroom test

In this study, the teaching for college English vocabulary mainly adopts the flipped classroom model. Based on the data feedback from the "VocabGo" platform, the teacher checks students' homework and makes further explanation for the points that students do not have good understanding. In response to the difficult vocabulary part reported in the "VocabGo", the teacher applies many kinds of methods, such as brainstorming, drawing vocabulary mind maps, writing stories, to build scaffold for students to have further and complete understanding about difficult parts. Through these classroom activities, students can consolidate and strengthen the related knowledge that they do not learn well before class so as to achieve the mastery of important and difficult part, and what's more, the pertinence and efficiency of classroom teaching are also improved.

After the key and difficult points are explained, the teacher assesses the students' learning situation in class by vocabulary tests. The tests will be conducted in the "VocabGo" platform. The key and difficult vocabulary feedback from the pre-class tests will be selected to re-examine. The students' total test scores in the "VocabGo" platform accounts for 5% of the final score, as the purpose is to make sure that students can attach great importance to vocabulary study and also to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and sustainability. The combination of teaching in class and self-study before class not only highlights the role of the teacher as the organizer and guider of the classroom but also helps students cultivate their independent learning ability and gain a sense of achievement from learning, which can make full use of the advantages of blended teaching in the era of information technology.

After class - "VocabGo" platform assists content internalization

Taking advantage of the built-in exercises in "VocabGo", which range from simple to complex and have various forms of exercises based on the content of this course, the teacher can improve the vocabulary learning requirements and choose some relatively high-levels of exercises to assign students to finish them after class. After that, the system automatically assigns scores. Teachers set different types of vocabulary tests at different time periods according to different requirements for word mastery, which not only effectively promotes the internalization of students' after-class knowledge, but also supplements and

improves the content that they learned in class.

At the same time, the top five students with excellent test scores are encouraged and praised, and they are invited to exchange and share their learning experiences in class. For students who fail the test, teachers advise them to re-study the content and take the test until their scores meet the standards. Apart from the classroom, online vocabulary competitions across the whole school can be organized based on the "VocabGo" platform, which is convenient and flexible for students to attend. Organizing such periodic large competitions helps to create a sustainable learning environment and stimulate students' interest in learning and improve their vocabulary.

In short, the online and offline blended college English vocabulary teaching model, based on the "VocabGo" learning platform, is a dynamic vocabulary teaching model that integrates learning, testing, teaching, and reflecting. It aims to make students' vocabulary learning have pre-class, in-class, and after-class integration with both online and offline approaches, which not only allows teachers to know the students' vocabulary learning situation well but also promotes students' English vocabulary learning and develop the good habits of self-study before class, in-depth learning in class, and continuous learning after class.

Feasibility analysis of the blended teaching model for college English vocabulary based on the "VocabGo" Platform

The application of "VocabGo" platform provides some new and fresh insights into the blended teaching of college English vocabulary. By incorporating the "VocabGo" platform into the pre-class, in-class, and post-class stages, it implements the concept of independent learning before class, key and difficult – points learning in class and internalized learning after class, prompting students to follow the teaching process and maximizing the effectiveness of students' online learning. Since the implementation of the blended teaching of English vocabulary with the help of "VocabGo" for a year, students' scores in vocabulary tests have greatly improved compared to before. With the continuous improvement of students' word test scores, students have also improved their reading comprehension level, reduced their anxiety of understanding the text, and meanwhile had more classroom interaction. In the questionnaire about their reflection on the "VocabGo" platform at the end of the semester, more than 80% of the students responded that the application of the "VocabGo" platform has expanded their vocabulary and improved the accuracy of vocabulary use. Nearly half of the students said that the "VocabGo" platform made word learning no longer boring and enhanced the fun of word learning.

This teaching model which integrates online and offline, is student-centered, and emphasizes students' independent

learning, and helps promote students' enthusiasm for English learning. In their daily study, each student can see the completion of their daily word tasks and class rankings, besides, they can also check their friends' word learning situation and compete with friends if they want. Driven by peer pressure and a cooperative learning atmosphere, their enthusiasm for taking the initiative to memorize words is further stimulated, and their autonomy in word learning is improved too, thus a good word learning atmosphere in the class is formed.

In the questionnaire survey, the vast majority of students expressed their affirmation of the word learning effect of this platform, and more than half of the students said they would continue to use "VocabGo" platform in the future. In addition, the blended teaching model that combines online and offline allows teachers and students to break free from the limitations of traditional classroom time and space. Students can independently arrange their learning progress and choose learning methods according to the learning content, to a certain extent, which achieves the personalization of the learning mode, and improves students' self-learning ability (Xingmei and Xinghua, 2015). So, the conclusion is that the blended teaching model of college English vocabulary based on "VocabGo" platform is approved by the vast majority of the students and is proved to be effective.

CONCLUSION

With the continuous advancement of contemporary information technology, the online and offline integrated blended teaching has become the mainstream trend in educational modernization. The blended teaching model of college English vocabulary based on the "VocabGo" platform breaks through the time and space limitations of the traditional teaching models, and promotes the overall improvement of students' English vocabulary ability. It guarantees blended teaching before class, assists blended teaching in class, and strengthens blended teaching after class. It fully plays the leading role of students, enhancing students' autonomous learning ability, and enables students to change from passive learning mode to active learning mode. Teachers can adjust teaching content in time, adapt proper teaching methods and improve the teaching efficiency based on students' real-time feedback, which makes great contributions to the reform of blended teaching in college English, improves students' overall quality, and cultivates more professional talents for society.

Funding

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