An Investigation on College Student Satisfaction in Blended Learning

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ABSTRACT

With the reduction of college English class hours in universities, blended learning has been increasingly widely used. In order to explore college students' satisfaction in blended learning, this study investigated 199 college students about their current autonomous learning ability, satisfaction in blended learning, and factors affecting their blended learning. It was found that students are weak in autonomous learning ability and dissatisfied in blended learning. The weak motivation, inconsistency in contents between online and offline learning and longer online learning time are the main factors influencing their blended learning.

Keywords: Blended learning, College students' satisfaction, Online learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development and extensive use of the Internet in the digital era, the traditional college English teaching model has received a huge impact. Intelligent information technology has gradually been introduced into foreign language teaching and has forced the reform of traditional foreign language teaching methods. Especially during the COVID-19 between 2020 and 2022, online classroom has been gradually accepted and widely used, and the teaching model combining online and offline has also developed rapidly. As is well known, traditional college English teaching is limited to classroom teaching by teachers and after-class exercises by students. The teacher is the center while students passively receive knowledge. In recent years, with the improvement of college students' English proficiency, the compression of college English credits has become a common trend in universities. Half of common universities have compressed credits to 12, while many key universities have compressed credits to 6-9 (Cai Jigang, 2012). With compressed credits and reduced class hours, college English teachers have to think about how college students can better and effectively learn English. In order to meet the higher requirements of people for the teaching of teachers and the learning of students, combined with the advantages of online learning and classroom learning (He Kekang, 2004:5), blended learning mode has emerged. The blended learning model, as an innovative method that combines online learning and traditional face-to-face teaching, has been applied in English teaching in many universities. Wang Shouren (2016) believed that modern information technology has played an increasingly important role in college English teaching. In the context of educational informatization, teachers should not stick to the conservative ways, but should try the latest modern educational technology and integrate it with college English classrooms to achieve the optimization of college English teaching effectiveness and achieve effective learning. Therefore, in order to promote the diversified development of university teaching, the learning progress and comprehensive development of students, universities have popularized the blended learning model in college English. College English learning in the blended learning environment means richer English learning resources, more autonomous English learning plans, and more personalized English learning methods. Due to the reduction of college English credits and class hours, many universities are exploring how to effectively integrate online learning with classroom teaching.

2. BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is a teaching method that integrates teaching resources by using information technology. It combines the advantages of online learning and traditional face-to-face teaching, emphasizes the leading role of teachers, cultivates students' autonomous learning ability, and meets their personalized needs (Lv Xiaomin, 2021). Mayadas & Picciano (2007) simply defined blended learning as the combination of online learning and face-to-face teaching. Blended learning combines the resource advantages of online learning and the face-to-face offline teaching, which can not only promote the leading role of teachers in teaching but also enable students to play a key role in learning (He Kekang, 2004). He Kekang (2005) believed that blended learning is the combination of the advantages of traditional learning methods and online learning. It should not only play the leading role of teachers in guiding, inspiring, and monitoring the teaching process, but also fully reflect the initiative, enthusiasm, and creativity of students as the main body of the learning process. This learning model can enrich students' learning patterns, break down temporal and spatial boundaries, and enable them to have a wider range of spatial planning learning modes (Zhang Lei, 2022). It combines traditional teaching methods and new online teaching media, breaking through the limitations of time and place, making college English teaching and learning no longer limited to just the classroom, and transforming learning time from classroom time to more flexible and controllable time for students. The purpose of blended learning is to boost the original teaching mode rather than replace it. The key to achieving the effectiveness of blended learning lies in how to effectively integrate online and classroom teaching activities through instructional design and then maximize the teaching benefits (Yang Fang, et al., 2017).

In recent years, the online learning platform such as MOOCs, *U-campus*, *Welearn*, and *Love Listening to English* have become ideal choices for blended learning in college English. Many scholars have conducted research on blended learning. Liu Weitong & Wang Xiaoxiao (2019) conducted a study on learner satisfaction in online learning and found that interaction and learning achievement have a direct positive impact on satisfaction. Many scholars (Diep et al., 2017; Zhang Si, et.al., 2017; Chen Jing, et al., 2021; Yin Rui & Xu Huanyun, 2019) have conducted research on learner

engagement in online learning. Research has found that students have unique and diverse behavioral engagement, rich and profound cognitive engagement, and positive and objective emotional engagement in blended learning. Moreover, learning engagement is influenced by both individual and environmental factors (Chen Jing, et al., 2017). In the online part of blended learning, students usually complete learning tasks on an individual basis and lack interpersonal interaction, resulting in weaker motivation (Rasheed, et al., 2020).

In terms of student learning satisfaction research, Knowles (1970) believes that learning satisfaction refers to the pleasant feeling or attitude of learners towards learning activities. A happy feeling or positive attitude is satisfaction, while the opposite is dissatisfaction. Although blended online and offline learning has its advantages, it is worth exploring whether college students are satisfied in blended college English learning and how they evaluate blended learning. In order to better employ blended learning model among college students, this research will explore college student satisfaction in this learning model based on the course provided by *Welearn*, *U-Campus*, and MOOC platform, and the influencing factors.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The following is the introduction about research questions, subjects and instruments.

3.1 Research Questions

In order to explore college student satisfaction in blended learning English, this study designed 3 research questions: 1) current college students' autonomous learning ability; 2) College students' satisfaction in blended learning; 3) the factors influencing their blended learning.

3.2 Research Subjects

199 college students were selected from a university in Sichuan, China. 10 of them were selected for interviews. 199 students have all undergone blended learning program of 'offline plus online' for one semester on *Welearn, U-Campus, and MOOC* platform. They completed online assignments related to the textbooks they used on *WeLearn*, as well as listening on U-campus and learning *Translating China* on MOOC.

3.3 Research Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire referred to the questionnaires by Chen Ming & Sang Xiaoshuang (2018) and Zhao Yingchuan (2018), with the aim of investigating college students' autonomous learning ability and satisfaction in the blended learning. The options for each question in the questionnaire are multiple-choice questions in the form of the Likert 5-level scale, with options being completely agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and completely disagree. The questionnaire is divided into two parts: the first part with 4 questions is to know about college students' autonomous learning ability and learning motivation towards blended learning. The second part with 6 questions which explore student satisfaction in blended learning includes: 1) Online learning contents can meet my different learning needs; 2) Blended learning mode can stimulate my interest in learning; 3) Blended learning will improve my academic performance and efficiency; 4) Blended learning is very helpful for my learning; 5) I am satisfied with blended learning; 6) The courses in blended learning are very interesting.

QuestionStar was used to design and distribute the questionnaire and collect data. The purpose of the interview is to supplement the questionnaire and understand the factors that inluence their blended learning.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The followings are the results of the study and discussion.

4.1 College Students' Autonomous Learning Ability in Blended Learning

The result of the questionnaire found that 77.89% of students cannot quickly accept and adapt to the blended learning of college English, 68.34% of students lack motivation to learn college English, 71.36% of students are unwilling to invest more time in blended learning, especially online learning, and only 41.71% of students frequently engage in online learning before class. These data indicate the insufficient autonomous learning and learning motivation of blended college English among college students. After one semester of blended learning, what is college students' evaluation on of blended learning?

4.2 College Student Satisfaction in Blended Learning

The "Table 1" shows that 78.89% of the students believe that blended learning cannot meet their learning needs (M=4.22, SD=.920); 80.9% agree that this learning mode cannot stimulate their learning interest (M=4.19, SD=.985); 74.37% do not think that blended learning can improve academic performance and efficiency (M=4.16, SD=.943); and 75.38% of the students believe that it is not helpful for their learning (M=4.16, SD=.975), and 77.89% are not content with the blended learning (M=4.22, SD=1.001). Only 29.16% believe that online courses are interesting (M=4.08, SD=1.041). Among the 10 interviewed students, 8 believed that the main motivation for online learning came from the required grades in the course, CET-4 and CET-6. It's easy to draw a conclusion that the majority of students are dissatisfied with blended learning and unwillingness to participate in blended learning courses. Blended learning cannot meet college students' learning needs and improve their learning efficiency and grades, or stimulate their learning interest.

Table 1. College student satisfaction in blended learning

Questions	N	Mean	SD
1	199	4.22	.920
2	199	4.19	.985
3	199	4.16	.943
4	199	4.16	.975
5	199	4.22	1.001
6	199	4.08	1.041

4.3 The Factors Influencing College Students' Blended Learning

Based on this result, this study conducted further interviews with 10 college students to explore the reasons why they are dissatisfied with online blended learning. 7 of the interviewees lack interest and motivation in online English learning. They have been used to face-to-face teaching. So this result is consistent with Rasheed et al. In the online part of blended learning, students usually complete learning tasks on an individual basis and lack interpersonal interaction, resulting in weaker motivation (Rasheed et al., 2020). 8 students believe that online learning takes a longer time and, and it is easy to develop a habit of procrastination

without the supervision and reminders of teachers. Meanwhile, the online knowledge which is required to finish do not match the actual classroom teaching contents and is boring. Therefore, they suggest that the online plus offline learning should be complementary to each other, and classroom learning time should be longer than online learning time. Zhao Yingchuan's (2018) study found that excessive online video information, long online learning time, and excessive online homework can all reduce the degree of achieving MOOC goals, leading to dissatisfaction among students. So the weak motivation, inconsistency in contents between online and offline learning and longer online learning time are the main factors for their dissatisfaction with blended learning.

5. CONCLUSION

Considering the results from this study that college students are not satisfied with blended learning and lack strong motivation and interest in English learning, the following suggestions are proposed:

The first is to guide students to transform their roles. It's quite important and necessary for college students, especially freshmen, to transform their roles from high school students to college students. Teachers should guide them to get the habit of self-study after class, supervise their study and inform them to finish the assignments online. Then they will gradually learn to study online and form the habit of autonomous learning.

The second is to stimulate students' learning motivation and interest. Learning motivation is the intrinsic motivation that drives students to engage in self-directed learning. Teachers should guide students to understand the significance and value of learning, and stimulate their inner interests. Meanwhile, students can enhance their learning motivation by setting challenging tasks and providing positive feedback. Frequent online and offline teacher-student interactions as well as the consistency in contents between offline and online learning are important factors in stimulating students' learning motivation. Effective student-teacher interaction can help students discover problems in learning and development in a timely manner, solve confusion in learning and life, clarify the purpose of learning and the meaning of life, stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, and improve their ability for independent learning and self-development (Jiang Hualin & Zhang Weiwei: 2012). The study indicates that

students expect more interaction with teachers both inside and outside the classroom. They expect teachers to not only provide offline guidance but also answer questions online on time, rather than passive online learning with only teacher supervision and ineffective interaction. The consistency of online and offline learning content is the main reason why most students are willing to actively learn online. Therefore, when designing blended learning content, teachers should consider how to better integrate offline and online contents, thereby stimulating students' interest in learning.

The third is to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability. Blended learning requires students to have stronger autonomous learning and self-management abilities to adapt to this new learning method. Teachers should strengthen adaptability guidance for blended college English learning, increase students' awareness of blended college English learning, guide students to clarify the direction of English learning, reduce their unfamiliarity and fatigue towards college English learning, and improve their initiative and learning efficiency in English learning (Zhang Mei & He Xi, 2020). The first step in autonomous learning is to set clear and specific learning goals. Students should understand the curriculum outline, clarify course objectives and requirements to maintain a clear direction during the learning process. Setting learning goals can enable students to learn purposefully and improve learning efficiency. Developing a detailed learning plan is a key step in cultivating students' ability for autonomous learning. Students should arrange their study time reasonably, allocate learning tasks, and ensure learning progress based on their learning objectives.

The fourth is the transformation of teacher roles. In traditional classroom education, teachers are the transmitters of knowledge, while blended learning mode requires teachers to transform from traditional classroom knowledge transmitters to guides and assistants of learning. This means that teachers also need to invest extra time, energy, and resources to adapt to this new teaching method.

Nowadays, with the large-scale adoption of blended learning in Chinese universities, it is worth exploring how to better utilize blended learning to stimulate college students' interest in English learning, cultivate their autonomous ability and promote the effective implementation of blended foreign language learning.

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