

## Effective College English Teaching in the Information Age

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**Abstract:** The concept of Internet+ and the rapid development of information technology brings vigor and vitality to college English teaching, and increases awareness of English teachers to consider how to design a more effective classroom. The approach of the information age asks for a distinctive change in both the teachers' teaching mode and students' learning attitude. Teachers should attach more importance to the related information on the internet to change their way of teaching in order to comply with the development of new age and explore effective ways to improve students' learning. Students should be more initiative to acquire new knowledge as well as enrich their learning resources in the information-based background. This paper is to explore how to design effective college English teaching in the information age.

### Introduction

The Internet+ action plan promoted the application of information technology in almost every field in society. Along with the rapid development of internet technology and the popularization of mobile communication equipment, information technology offers unlimited degree of possibilities to the development of education and teaching. In the era of Internet+, online learning resources can be acquired speedily and conveniently. Thus, the traditional educational concepts and teaching modes are subjected to great challenges. Therefore, how to confront such challenges in the new era, how to change the traditional teaching concepts, how to construct Internet+ education teaching mode, and how to improve teaching methods need to be considered deeply. With the continuous promotion of information-based education in China, more and more attention has been focused on the combination of informational methods and college English teaching.

Scholars and teachers working on college English teaching both at home and abroad begin to devote themselves to applying information technology to college English classrooms and launch a series of practical researches on English teaching. The integration of information technology and classroom teaching is a new teaching mode of the combination of information technology, information resources and classroom teaching based on modern educational theories. [1] The successful implementation of information-based classroom teaching includes multi-media classroom, online classroom, campus network and qualified teachers with technical ability of information education. Under the influence of the trend of Internet+, English teaching has ushered in new opportunities with regard to teaching modes, teaching methods and teaching contents. The new teaching modes such as English Microlectures and MOOCs break the limits of teaching time and space between teachers and students so that students can learn English at any time and any place. With the deepening of information technology, college English teaching will keep pace with the time to enrich itself for the students to broaden their horizons. [2]

Despite the achievements, there is still so much to be done in realizing effective English teaching. This paper is to explore how to design effective college English teaching in the information age.

### Current Teaching Situation in the Information Environment

As early as 2004, College English Teaching Requirements published by the Ministry of Education emphasized the full use of modern information technology in English teaching in order to improve the traditional teaching modes. At present time, most universities and colleges have multi-media classrooms and realized computer aided education. The application of information technology highlights great advantages in English teaching. It not only provides convenient and colorful resources, but also enriches teaching forms and contents. Although so much progress has been made, there are still several existed problems to be solved in college English teaching development.

From the aspect of the universities, there is a serious deficiency in relevant equipment and a severe shortage of fund put into the construction of information-based classrooms. The information-based education relies so much on the internet that there should be favorable network on campus, which requires the universities and colleges to pour large amounts of fund into the campus hardware. [3] On the other hand, universities and colleges should offer opportunities to the campus software, that is to say, teachers, for them to get access to certain specialized training to enhance their information-based ability so that they can be qualified with the updated knowledge about information technology.

From the aspect of teachers, many of them are not so active with the current teaching concepts. The classroom activities are still centered on teaching grammar and translation. The use of multi-media is just a transformation from paper textbook to electronic edition. However, the use of PowerPoint in a multi-media classroom is not equal to an actual informationized teaching. Furthermore, some teachers depend on online resources so much that the classroom atmosphere is active superficially and the students are not able to learn some concrete knowledge. Therefore, the effect of teaching cannot be reached. For some other teachers, they cannot reach to abundant information technology so they cannot fully participate in the information-based education. Apart from that, many teachers can only learn the updated information technology by themselves. As a result, they cannot apply the updated knowledge to meet the need in informationized teaching.

From the aspect of the students, since they are the principal part in the information-based teaching, their participation in teaching is extremely important. However, in real English teaching, students pay less attention to English learning. Neither do they fully engage in classroom activities, nor do they review English systematically after class. Therefore, their low participation and lack of initiative in learning affects the overall learning atmosphere and the expected teaching effect cannot be reached accordingly. What's more, many of them are not capable of making individual study plan or setting personal learning goals. They are not so motivated in study and unable to control themselves, so many of them are distracted from learning in face of abundant online resources and attractions. [4] In such circumstances, many students cannot achieve their goal to construct their knowledge on their own. Their output of English language is far less than their input acquired in class.

From the aspect of the combination of teaching content and the information technology, there is still a gap between them which needs to be filled. The teaching contents are the major information conveyed in classroom teaching activities from teachers to students by using textbooks and multimedia. There is a big obstacle in the combination between internet technology and the textbooks. The network-based textbook needs a great deal of time and fund, and the rhythm of the new published textbooks can hardly follow the rapid development of modern time, which undoubtedly affects the variety of teaching contents. What's more, teachers and textbooks are no longer the single information carrier for the imparting of knowledge in classrooms. Instead, the technology of network multi-media provides teachers and students a main source for information.

From the aspect of teaching environment, modern information technology brings so much improvements such as multimedia, internet learning resources, email, WeChat, learning APP to traditional classroom teaching environment. However, there are still lots of problems in real teaching. Big English classes with too many students in one classroom in many universities and colleges combined with the traditional arrangements of fixed desks and chairs in the classroom causes lack of effectiveness in modern information technology in college English teaching. What's more, students feel overwhelming and hard to digest about the overuse of courseware and large amounts of information from the online database. Hence, it is not always better to have more resources. Both teachers and students should devote themselves to judging and selecting resources that they need.

Furthermore, communications through modern electronic media decrease the chances of face to face communication, emotional and information exchanges between teachers and students, which are not good for harmonious teacher-student relationships. [5]

All the above factors considered, effective college teaching cannot realized in many classrooms so far.

### **Construction of Effective College English Teaching in the Information Age**

Effective college English teaching needs to be attached great importance in the information age. In the following, this paper is to explore several strategies to construct effective college English teaching, including the construction of the teaching resources database,

#### **Improvement of Teachers' Professional Skills**

English teachers are the leaders in English teaching and instructor to enhance students' English ability. In the process of college English teaching reform, the improvement of teachers' professional competency and proficiency is the key point. Teachers are supposed to show their professional competency and proficiency in full play and they should be qualified with a set of scientific and effective teaching method. They are required to instruct students effectively in their English learning process and possess a strong command of information technology. With regard to the use of information technology, universities and colleges should make greater efforts in teachers' training to direct teachers to know how to use the modern equipment to search for relative teaching materials.

Information-based teaching is a teaching mode that is instructed by modern teaching ideas, supported by information technology and based on modern teaching methods. In information-based teaching, the teaching ideas, organization, contents, mode, evaluation and environment should be information based. Therefore, the information-based teaching should be designed according to students' learning need, social need and career need to make systematic and scientific analysis in order to improve the overall teaching in the information age. Teachers should apply the teaching method of network information technology, paying attention to both the accumulation of students' knowledge reserves and the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability and thinking creativity. [6]

At the same time, universities and colleges should construct network teaching platform to meet teacher's teaching needs. In students' process of individual learning, teachers can monitor and guide them effectively in order to ensure the quality and effect of students' autonomous learning. It is beyond doubt that teachers should constantly renew their teaching ideas and view information technology as their powerful assistant in order to consciously improve their teaching and enhance their teaching effect through information technology.

#### **Construction of Teaching Resources Database**

The construction of the teaching resources is the basis of information-based education and it is the security of promoting information-based teaching ability. The resources should be composed of electronic courseware database, test system, video database and audio database. The online resources database should be a combination of knowledge and entertainment. The courseware database is a collection of all the electronic courses online. The test system is a gathering of tests on specific English subjects, midterm or final term tests, CET-4 and CET-6 test papers or model test papers. For the video and audio database, there are knowledge about introduction to Chinese and English cultures, stories, speeches, songs, movies and other entertaining information for students to learn and enjoy. The online teaching resources database in a beneficial supplement to the traditional textbooks, and it can be able to be updated in the ever-developing information age. By consulting such database, teachers can provide students with more learning materials, and students can learn anywhere at any time according to their own timetable. [7]

The teaching resources database needs accumulating and updating. Teachers are supposed to integrate the teaching materials and update the database according to present students' interests and

the current issues. The application of the online teaching resources database can make up the defects of the limitation of traditional textbooks and teachers can improve their teaching methods and optimize college English teaching by using the database.

### **Teaching Design in the Information Age**

Although many English teachers prefer to apply PowerPoint in their English teaching, it is worth noting that PowerPoint is helpful in improving teaching efficiency, while the emphasis should be placed on helping students study independently, that is to say, the process from teaching to learning. In classroom teaching, various information-based technology should be used to weaken teachers' leading role but to strengthen students' autonomous learning mode, which gives priority to students' independent learning. The teaching design in the information age should be open and interactive, which can present the teaching contents to students by using creation of various situations, exploring teaching methods and cooperation teaching in order to enhance the interaction between PowerPoint and students and help students apply what they have learnt into daily activities. As a result, students are able to improve their learning interest and ability so as to think more in classroom teaching.

Current college students are a generation grown in the information age. They are so familiar with various information technology that they have a deeper understanding of many social media such as QQ, WeChat, Microblog. Teachers should use those new exchanging ways based on information in order to interact and communicate more with students after class. What's more, students' independent learning groups should be constructed based on the application of new media. Students are capable of interaction between each other in their learning groups after class. Teachers may also upload high-quality English learning materials online by using those social media so as to help students learn English independently after class.

With the help of Internet plus, students are able to break the limitation of time and space. Also, the use of mobile phones and computers enables them to study anytime and anywhere. By virtue of the above mentioned social media, students can acquire a good deal of learning materials to preview the new lesson before class and finish further tasks after class. Furthermore, students can communicate with their teachers freely online and discuss academic problems which helps broaden their horizon.

### **The Application of Blended Learning Mode**

Blended learning mode against the background of Internet plus is a new learning approach of the combination of online learning and classroom teaching based on network techniques and it is also the developing trend of college English reform. Students in the new age are openminded and they are willing to take in something novel. Blended learning mode changes traditional classroom teaching mode greatly by encouraging students' active learning and allow full play to their subjective initiative to explore knowledge. [8]

This learning mode mixes the teacher's guidance and students' autonomous learning effectively and interrelates knowledge taught in class and technical skill applied closely. First, through the construction of learning platform based on network techniques, teachers and students can share learning resources and interact and communicate after class. Second, by integrating online and offline class, teachers can promote students to learn actively. More interaction and communication online makes up the shortcoming of limited time in traditional classroom teaching. Thus, both students learning efficiency and teachers' teaching effect are highly enhanced. Third, formative evaluation and summative evaluation are combined to assess students' learning. By the application of this method, students' preview before class, performance in class and review after class can be monitored and managed thoroughly. [9] As a result, a fairly objective evaluation can be made for each student.

The teaching idea of blended learning is a change from the traditional teacher-centered teaching into a student-centered teaching. Teachers are more like organizers and instructors in class. They use different ways to carry on their teaching such as flipped classroom, task-driven teaching method, collaborative inquiry and group discussions. The above mentioned teaching methods used in class lay emphasis on students' individual learning and their team learning ability. In blended learning mode, both and teachers and the students can get rid of the limit of time and space in traditional teaching.

Teachers can use appropriate method and offer suitable learning materials to stimulate students to think and solve problems actively. [10] The blended learning mode also helps students to acquire knowledge, master learning methods and cultivate team work spirit in collaborative inquiry and group discussions, which further lays a solid foundation for the development of student's innovation ability.

## Summary

The approaching of Internet plus era brings challenges as well as opportunities to college English teaching. Both teachers and students should seize the opportunities to adapt to the development of the information age and apply the network information technology into college English teaching. It leads students to take full advantage of information technology to study. This teaching mode can discover and develop students' personality, break the time and space limitation of English learning, enhance students' independent learning and design a relatively systematic and scientific English learning system.

The information-based English teaching changes the fixed learning mode in traditional English teaching and offers possibility for students to obtain more learning platforms and resources. Hence, students have access to learning flexibly at anywhere and at any time. There is a possibility for them to be the real leader in their own study and learn English autonomously. Moreover, the information-based teaching enables college English teaching environment to be innovative. It integrates theoretical learning with new media technology combining online and offline learning, which expands teaching contents and improves teaching effect. Furthermore, the information-based teaching changes the traditional teaching's status quo of emphasizing on theory over practice. The introduction of new media technology develops English learning to the direction of exploration and application. Teachers are no longer knowledge conveyor but knowledge instructor with the aid of information technology. They widen their class according to the development of time and emphasize more on student's comprehensive ability development and independent learning cultivation.

In college English teaching, the implementation of information-based teaching is able to promote the teaching effect actively. College English teachers should take all measures to develop their teaching ability based on information technology, enrich English teaching resources, and construct the effective college English teaching so as to enhance students comprehensive English ability to meet the criterion of college English teaching reform.

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