Research on the Application and Effect of Blended Learning in English Listening and Speaking Course for English Majors
——Taking G College as an Example

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Abstract. With the advent of the information age and new literal arts, the traditional class learning model and the e-learning cannot meet the needs of English learning. Under such circumstance, the blended learning model is widely applied since 2020. This paper aims to investigate the status quo of the application and effect of blended learning model, adopting questionnaire as research method with 207 participants of English majors in second year in G college. The research shows that the application of blended learning is at a medium level (M=65.64%); and it has achieved a certain success mainly reflected in the improvement of students' interest in active communication between teachers and students (M=79.36%). A majority of students (84.72%) believe that online listening materials are convenient for repeating, dictating and review; most students think through blended learning model class, their abilities and skills of English listening and speaking has been improved in some degree. But the teachers' timely feedback (24.56%) is not satisfactory. In addition, this paper also analyzes the interior and exterior factors influencing the application and the effect of blended learning from the aspects of students, teachers, school management and digital environment, and accordingly provides feasible suggestions to improve effectiveness of it, which will be helpful in the enhancement of education justice and lifelong learning through digital empowerment.

Keywords: blended learning; application and effect; English majors; digital empowerment.

1   Introduction

With the development of information technology and the advancement of new liberal arts, which stresses that the innovation of model can promote high quality development and inter-disciplinary talents. In English teaching and learning, scholars and researchers have been innovating the models. The traditional face-to-face learning has some disadvantages, so has online learning. Also, the students are the so called "Digital Natives", having high level of internet proficiency. Under this condition, He Kekang (2004)[1] proposed "blended learning" in China, which combines the advantages of traditional teaching and network teaching.

Through thorough analysis, researches on blended learning were conducted mainly from four aspects both at home and abroad: definitions, status quo of application, efficiency and influencing factors. Different scholars such as Singh (2001)[2], Rovai & Jordan (2004: 4)[3], He Kekang

(2004)[4], Bañados (2006)[5], Bliuc, Goodyear & Ellis (2007: 234)[6],Yen & Lee (2011: 138)[7], Zhen Rong (2013:142) [8]define blended learning differently, but the major feature of it is "compilation and integration": online +offline, inside class +outside class.

In term of the status quo of blended learning application, Arabasz and Baker's (2003)[9] survey showed that about 80% of American schools also adopt blended curriculum, while 50% of the UK's education informatization funds are used in the reform of the blended learning model. Through searching "B-learning" as the keyword in CNKI, 30,048(retrieve date: 5.22.2023) research results can be found. It is found that the researches on "Blended-learning" have reached a considerable scale. Since 2016, the research trend of it has shown a linear growth trend.

In efficiency terms, Ige (2017)[10] showed that blended learning in junior secondary schools in Nigeria is effective. It transformed the teacher-centered approach into student-centered, which plays a vital role to optimize students' learning strategies and outcomes. Zhou Jianmei (2019)[11] pointed out that the blended teaching model with new connotations in the new era will change the current situation of "time-consuming and inefficient" teaching. Chen Yuxin (2022)[12], Liu Junjun (2023)[13] proved that blended learning has a positive impact on student learning in aspects of cognition, skill, and emotional attitude dimensions.

As for the influencing factors of blended learning, Badurl Khan (2006)[14], Li Fengqing &Han Xiaoling (2017)[15] argued that the main factors affecting blended learning were teaching institutions, teaching elements, teaching techniques, teaching design, assessment, management, support of meaningful learning environment, and ethics. Lalima& Kiran Lata Dangwal (2017)[16] consider that blended learning needs rigorous efforts, right attitude, handsome budget and highly motivated teachers and students for its successful implementation. Besides, the empirical applications of blended learning model in G college mainly refer to the flow diagram of Li Fengqing &Han Xiaoling (2017), which is shown below.
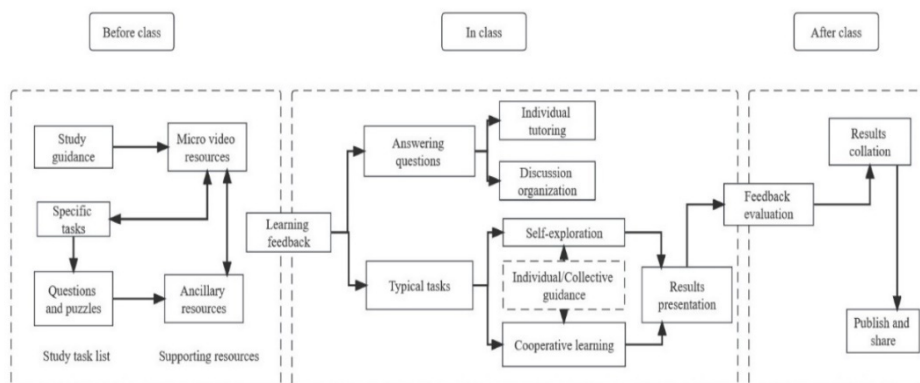

Fig. 1. The flow diagram of blended learning model application

To sum up, based on the analysis of previous researches, it found that most empirical researches were conducted in universities, but a few of them in independent college, the students of which are a quite different group. In addition, the English listening and speaking skills of the students

are relatively low. Therefore, this paper aims to find out the attitude, current application, effectiveness and influencing factors of blended learning model in English listening and speaking class, which will provide evidences to improve students' English learning effect in independent college.

2 Research Design

2.1 Research questions

This study is conducted from perspective of students with following questions:

(1) What is the status quo the application and effect of blended learning in English Listening and Speaking Course for English majors?

(2) What are the main problems of blended learning in application?

(3) What factors influence the application and learning effect of blended learning?

2.2 Research participants

This paper takes 207 participants of English majors in second year in G college as participants, among which 299 are girls and 8 are boys. So, this paper does not analyze correlation of gender.

2.3 Research instrument

According to the research question, this paper applies questionnaire as instrument, which includes five dimensions: Students' attitude, application, online platform, online learning tools, and learning effect. This study adopted the questionnaire from Liu Sisi (2022)[17], but the dimensions were classified differently, as shown in table1.

Table 1. The Items of Five Dimensions

Items	Number of questions
Students' attitude of blended-teaching model	1-2
The application of blended-teaching model	3-8
Online platform	9
Types of online learning tools	10
Learning effect	11-21

2.4 Research process

There are two steps: data collection and data analysis. First of all, the questionnaire was sent out through Wen Juan Xing platform, and then invites participants to fill in the questionnaire carefully according to their actual learning situation. Then the meaningful data was collected on the Wen Juan Xing platform. After checking and deleting invalid responses, the data was analyzed with the help of Wen Juan Xing platform and excel, which marked the degree by percentage.

3   Results and Discussion

3.1   Result analysis of application and learning effect of blended learning

This part is about application and learning effect of blended learning model according to the empirical data with details below.

The status quo of application of blended learning model in English listening and speaking classes.

Based on the research questions, in this study the results of application and learning effect of blended learning are thoroughly analyzed. From survey, it is found that most of students think that the blended learning is generally used in daily teaching and learning (M of agreement =65.64%), while a few of them think it is seldom used (M of agreement =11.08%), as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Status quo of Application of Blended Learning model

Items	A	B	C	D	E
3	23.06%	45.04%	25.13%	3.8%	2.97%
4	26.32%	48.89%	20.43%	2.53%	1.83%
5	34.54%	50.27%	12.02%	2.14%	1.03%
6	25.32%	48.58%	20.57%	3.46%	2.07%
7	20.24%	48.03%	24.07%	4.62%	3.04%
8	8.03%	16.53%	35.61%	36.78%	3.05%
M	22.92%	42.72%	23.14%	8.89%	2.19%

Notes: A=completely agree; B=almost agree; C=sometimes agree; D= almost disagree; E=completely disagree.

From table 2, in English listening and speaking class, 85.81% of students tend to enjoy communication and discussion by online internet tools (item 5), while 73.9% of students prefer communication and class discussion offline (item 6), which indicates that in the context of "Internet +" and "Generation Z"[18], a majority of students are inclined to accept blend learning model. About 68% of students would voluntarily learn the online learning material (item1), and 68.27% of them think the quantity of quantity of learning materials provided by teachers is appropriate(item7), which indicates that the students' initiatives in learning in G college is relatively low. However, item 8 shows that only 39.83% of students think that teachers would not check the online learning outcome and give feedbacks timely, which is a big problem.

To get more specific information of application of blended learning model, online learning platforms and tools are analyzed. Chinese university MOOC ranks first, followed by Wisdom tree and icourse, while as for online learning tools, Learning Through and Rain Classroom are widely used, followed by Tencent Meeting, especially during COVID-19, and QQ group is favored because its easy access to storage of messages and documents.

The learning effect of English listening and speaking with blended learning model.

Based on the survey data, the learning effect of blended learning model is quite satisfactory. About 76% of students are satisfied with the effects of blended learning model in English listening and speaking course as shown in table 3.

Table 3. The Data of Learning Effect of Blended Learning Model

Items	A	B	C	D	E
11	7.20%	65.03%	22.42%	3.8%	1.55%
12	15.96%	68.76%	13.12%	2.08%	0.08%
13	12.32%	57.46%	22.32%	2.13%	5.77%
14	6.03%	70.14%	20.52%	2.06%	1.25%
15	6.54%	71.18%	14.46%	3.24%	4.58%
16	7.05%	70.18%	16.72%	4.06%	1.99%
17	10.13%	60.21%	20.05%	3.57%	6.04%
18	11.42%	67.89%	12.35%	2.06%	6.28%
19	11.68%	70.03%	14.46%	2.65%	1.18%
20	12.31%	65.45%	18.25%	2.31%	1.68%
M	9.76%	65.83%	18.27%	3.00%	3.14%

Notes: A=completely agree; B=almost agree; C=sometimes agree; D= almost disagree; E=completely disagree.

From table 3, about 72% of students think that blended learning model is beneficial to acquire knowledge (item 11), interesting and relaxing, which helps improve the learning efficiency (item 12). 84.72% of students believe that online listening materials are convenient for repeating, dictating and review (item 13) without the limitations of time and space, which is a greater advantage.

Blended learning model can help them enhance students' abilities such as analytical ability, problem-solving ability (item 14) as well as access to resources (item 19), and each takes up 76.17% and 81.71% respectively. In addition, 77.72% of students think it would help them better master the skills of pronunciation, listening and speaking(item15), stimulate learning initiative (item 16) and about 78% of students are willing to communicate with teacher and peers, practice cooperation spirit (item 17), and engage in lively learning activities (item 18). Furthermore, 77.76% of students expect there will be more courses with blended learning model (item 20). However, according to item 17, 9.61% of students disagree with the tendency that they are more willing to communicate with teachers and classmates, which should be paid enough attention for it will bring severe consequences. And 6.28% of students completely disagree with the fact that English listening and speaking class with blended learning model cannot help to improve their ability to search for more learning materials.

3.2   Discussion

Main Problems of blended learning model in aspects of application and learning effect.

With reference to the data, it is found that even though blended learning model is widely applied and proved to be effective, but there are still some problems, which correspond to the disadvantages of blended learning model (see figure 1) from six parts.
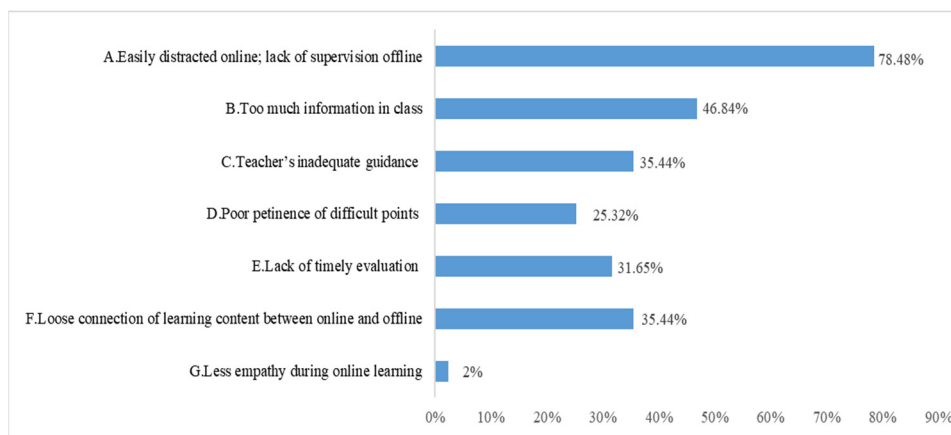
Fig. 2. The Disadvantages of Blended Learning Model

From figure 2 above, it is found, first of all, that 78.48% of students think they are easily distracted when learning online and lack of supervision offline, which shows students' sense of self-control is quite weak. Secondly, another important problem is that students are busy with a load of homework and they lack flexible time to have extended reading and deep learning, because there is too much information offered both online and offline. Thirdly, about 35.44% of the students think that teachers' guidance of learning is not adequate, which leads to their low learning efficiency. Teachers play a vital role in students' learning habits, strategies, affection and outcome, etc. Therefore, teachers training of blended learning model needs to be implemented and enhanced. Fourthly, the connection of learning materials between online and offline is not closely related, equally accounting for 35.44%, with the result that they are sometime incapable of constructing the knowledge systematically, which in turn influence students' outcome and confidence, even career recognition. Moreover, 31.65% of students think teachers cannot evaluate their learning process and outcome, and accordingly five feedbacks in time, which makes students are uncertain about learning, which corresponds to the result of item 8 in Table 2. At last, the pertinence of important and difficult points of the learning are seldom marked and explained clearly, resulting in students' poor mastery of key concepts, poor abilities to think, infer, analyze, summarize, conclude and express reasonably. Still, it is noteworthy that quite a few students think during online learning, the empathy between teachers and students is less.

The influencing factors in the application and learning effect of blended learning model.

According to the analysis of existing problems, this part tends to analyze the influencing factors in the application and learning effect of blended learning model from aspects mentioned above.

From perspective of students.

In term of students, not being self-disciplined is the major concern. It corresponds to the fact that a large number of students don't get earnest initiative in learning, with the result that their minds might wander in class or during homework no matter online or offline, in the class or out of the class. Apart from this, some students claimed that they are not familiar with the platform, which makes them get lower grade. Besides, some students' attitude towards blended learning

model is not preferable, and some are unwilling to communicate with others (item 17 with disagreement percentage of 9%).

From perspective of teachers.

As shown in figure 1, teacher takes a large part in affecting application and effectiveness of blended learning model in English listening and speaking class. At first, too much learning materials are assigned that they only chase for "finishing" the tasks and homework, let alone deep learning. Secondly, teachers' limited supervision and guidance are causes of lee effective learning. And sometimes there may be some deviations between online teaching content and offline teaching content. Most importantly, lack of evaluation and feedback account for satisfaction of application and effectiveness of blended learning model (item 8) since it provides students what to do next and how to make progress.

Poor information technology.

According to the survey, teachers' supervision, evaluation on the platform, and teaching design affects students learning, which mainly resulted from their poor information technology. Some teachers, especially elder ones, are reluctant to take time to learn new things, while some teachers recommend online platforms and tools as additional resources and homework checking, but seldom to consider its real value. Meanwhile, students, particularly those who come from rural areas, claimed that they cannot use computers and internet resources skillfully, which makes them hold negative attitudes towards blended learning.

Unsystematic college management mechanism.

As reform goes, implementing a new model of teaching and learning requires much energy and strength from all aspects. But among them, the management mechanism matters more because it is the "top design", playing a leading role. However, the management in G college is not satisfactory with fuzzy system of rewards and penalties, outdated teaching devices which makes it difficult to record in-class performance.

Strategies for optimizing application and learning effect of blended learning model.

In order to solve the problems analyzed above, this part aims to put forward some strategies to optimize the application of blended learning model, which helps improve students' English learning efficiency, advancing high quality development of English.

Updating teaching philosophy and switching roles.

Truly, blended learning model requires teachers play roles differently from guides, mentors rather than purveyors of information only. In blended learning model, it advocates an idea of "Students-centered, teacher-guided". Thus teachers, acted as the role of scaffolding, should design every learning activity attentively from the center of students, aiming to stimulate students' learning drives in the hope of helping students achieve learning objectives effectively.

Enhancing students' self-restraint.

Nowadays there are too much online information distracting students' attention. Students should be encouraged, rewarded and supervised appropriately by teachers in daily teaching and learning activities, which helps them to cultivate good learning habits and strategies. Also, things like peer-supervision and should be established to enhance their capacity of self-restraint, which would be helpful to develop the ability of "Learning to learn".

Setting digital environment.

Firstly, college management department should establish effective and convenient teaching system, and encourage teachers to apply new teaching models like blended learning model by providing relative rewards. At the same time, teachers should be trained regularly to learn new information technology. Only by joint efforts can the blended leaching model be continuously improved.

4   Conclusions

In the context of information technology and construction of new liberal arts, blended learning model has distinct advantages. This empirical study finds that blended learning model is widely used. By having blended learning classes, students' willingness to communicate and abilities to analyze, solve problems and access to resources are improved, so do their listening and speaking skills. However, in blended learning, some students lack self-restraint and they are easily distracted during online classes, while inadequate evaluation, supervision and feedback from teachers are big problems, together with inappropriate amount of information and less empathy. The causes of these problems are complex, but mainly lie in the aspects of students, teachers, and college management mechanism including information technology. Accordingly, the training of blended learning model for teachers is crucially important in updating teaching philosophy, optimizing teaching design and improving class management skills alike. Students' awareness of self-restraint should be cultivated and improved, and equivalently, their ability of "Learning to learn" should be reinforced. Finally, the college management mechanism lays a profound foundation for all teaching and learning activities, which should be perfected gradually in the hope of optimizing blended learning model to train English talents and achieve high quality education.

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