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Application and Exploration of a Project-Based Learning Model Integrated with Blended Learning in the "English Viewing, Listening and Speaking I" Course: A Case Study of Tianfu College of SWUFE

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Abstract

With the advancement of educational informatization into the 2.0 era characterized by artificial intelligence and big data, the focus of higher education reform has shifted from the mere application of technology to the deep restructuring of teaching models. Blended learning, as a mainstream paradigm integrating online and offline advantages, and its fusion with Project-Based Learning (PBL), which emphasizes deep inquiry and competency integration, has become a critical pathway for cultivating higher-order thinking skills and comprehensive application abilities. This paper takes the course "English Viewing, Listening & Speaking Training I" at Tianfu College of SWUFE as a practical case study to systematically elaborate on a blended learning model deeply integrated with PBL concepts. Supported by the Tsinghua English Online platform, this model thoroughly reconstructs the traditional "transmission" teaching approach, establishing a three-phase teaching closed loop: "project-based self-study before class, collaborative knowledge internalization and outcome-oriented production during class, and diversified expansion and competition-driven activities after class." Furthermore, this paper constructs a diversified formative assessment system encompassing multiple dimensions such as platform data, vocabulary accumulation, classroom performance, and academic competitions, tightly integrating learning process management with ultimate competency assessment.

Teaching practice demonstrates that this model significantly enhances the course's effectiveness, students' autonomous learning ability, and the course's advanced nature and challenge level. It effectively addresses pain points in traditional Viewing, Listening, and Speaking courses, such as low student engagement, insufficient language output, etc, providing a replicable and operable reference paradigm for similar courses.

Keywords:

Blended Learning; Project-Based Learning (PBL); English Viewing, Listening & Speaking; Teaching Reform; Formative Assessment; Deep Learning

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1.Introduction

Against the backdrop of the "VUCA" (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) era, where global economic integration and the information technology revolution are deeply intertwined, university English teachers must reconsider their teaching philosophies to better cultivate students. [1] Excellent English communication skills, particularly efficient listening and speaking abilities, have become core competencies for high-quality international talent. However, traditional teaching of the "English Viewing, Listening & Speaking" course in Chinese universities has long faced severe challenges: the limited classroom hours struggle to reconcile with vast teaching objectives, often trapping the teaching mode in a repetitive cycle of "teacher plays audiovisual materials - students check answers - teacher explains," leaving students in a passive reception state with scarce opportunities for high-quality, contextualized language output, thus failing to effectively stimulate their learning interest and intrinsic motivation.

The "College English Teaching Guidelines (2020 Edition)" explicitly emphasizes the need to promote the deep integration of information technology with English teaching, innovate teaching models, and enhance students' English application abilities. Driven by both policy guidance and technological empowerment, the combination of blended learning and project-based learning offers a highly promising solution to overcome these challenges.

Blended learning is not a simple superposition of online and offline activities; rather, it aims to optimize teaching effects by organically integrating the flexibility and resource richness of online learning with the interpersonal interaction depth and emotional support advantages of offline face-to-face instruction. Project-Based Learning (PBL), as a student-centered inquiry-based teaching method, centers on guiding students to engage in in-depth inquiry and collaboration around a real, complex, and challenging problem or task over an extended period, acquiring skills, knowledge, and experience while ultimately producing demonstrable outcomes, thereby constructing knowledge and developing comprehensive abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative communication during the process.[2]

Embedding PBL's principles and methods within a blended learning framework that idriving projects, transforming online autonomous learning into an information gathering and knowledge preparation phase for project inquiry, converting the offline classroom into a workshop for project collaboration, problem-solving, and outcome refinement, and extending the post-class phase into a stage for project outcome deepening and expansion.[3]

Based on the teaching reform practice in the "English Viewing, Listening & Speaking Training I" course at Tianfu College of SWUFE, this paper aims to delve into how to systematically integrate the core principles of PBL throughout the blended teaching process, constructing a new teaching model with clear objectives, controllable processes, and diverse evaluations. Therefore, this paper will not only detail the specific design and implementation procedures of the model but also analyze its preliminary effectiveness and challenges based on teaching platform data and student feedback, hoping to provide a detailed and in-depth theoretical and practical reference for the reform of English viewing, listening, and speaking courses in similar applied undergraduate colleges.

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2. Current Situation Analysis: Deep-Seated Challenges and Era Opportunities in Traditional English Viewing, Listening & Speaking Courses

To construct an effective reform model, one must first have a clear and profound understanding of the drawbacks of traditional teaching models and accurately grasp the favorable conditions in the current educational ecosystem.

2.1 Three Deep-Seated Challenges Faced by Traditional Teaching Models

2.1.1 Structural Contradiction Between Classroom Time-Space Limitations and High Teaching Objectives

The "English Viewing, Listening & Speaking" course aims to cultivate students' comprehensive language application abilities, particularly emphasizing real-time comprehension and oral expression, which require extensive practice and interaction. However, in most universities' training programs, this course is typically set within limited hours. Within this extremely limited classroom time, teachers often have to focus on explaining knowledge points to complete the set teaching progress, dedicating a significant amount of time to playing audiovisual materials and checking answers, severely squeezing the time for student-student interaction, teacher-student interaction, in-depth discussions, personalized feedback, and situational simulation exercises.[4] Consequently, the classroom is reduced to a "listening test venue" rather than an "oral workshop," failing to guarantee the quantity and quality of students' language output and struggling to break free from the dilemma of "dumb English."

2.1.2 Disconnection Between Teaching Model Homogenization and Students' Personalized, Interactive Needs

"Digital native" college students have grown up in an environment surrounded by the Internet, computers, and electronic games, with electronic products fully integrated into their lives. [5] However, for a long time, many viewing, listening, and speaking classrooms have continued with a teacher-centered, textbook-based "lecture-style" model. This model features a fixed process and single method, struggling to adapt to the digital-native college students' demands for diversified, interactive, and engaging learning methods in the digital age. Students' individual differences, such as listening proficiency, oral fluency, and learning styles, are easily overlooked in uniform-paced teaching, leading to polarized learning interests: high-achieving students find it insufficient, while low-achieving students struggle to keep up, resulting in poor overall teaching effectiveness.

2.1.3 Misalignment Between Single Evaluation System and Comprehensive Ability Cultivation Objectives

Traditional course evaluations often rely excessively on final written exams, a "one-exam-decides-all" approach that fails to scientifically and comprehensively reflect students' efforts, progress, strategic application, and comprehensive ability development throughout the learning process. It primarily assesses students' memory and exam-taking skills rather than their thinking abilities, cultural literacy, and emotional attitudes. [6]

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This partially misguides students' learning directions, encouraging cramming before exams rather than focusing on regular accumulation and practice, contrary to the course's educational objectives.

2.2 Era Opportunities Brought by Educational Technology Development

Challenges coexist with opportunities. Against the backdrop of the digital age, the widespread application of information technology in the educational field provides unprecedented favorable conditions for teaching reforms, effectively enhancing teaching effects and quality.[7]

2.2.1 Support from Mature Intelligent Learning Platforms

Online learning platforms, represented by Tsinghua English Online, have transcended their early functions, integrating advanced features such as intelligent speech evaluation, adaptive learning paths, big data-driven learning situation analysis, and human-computer interaction exercises. This provides a solid technological foundation for implementing personalized online autonomous learning. Teachers can leverage platform data to precisely grasp students' learning situations and achieve "teaching based on students' learning"; students, in turn, can receive immediate feedback and learn at their own pace.

2.2.2 Cultivation of Students' Digital Learning Habits

Contemporary college students have grown up alongside the Internet and mobile intelligent terminals, naturally inclined to utilize fragmented time for learning through mobile apps and mini-programs. This highly developed digital literacy enables them to quickly adapt and actively participate in blended learning models that combine online and offline elements, providing crucial subjective conditions for the smooth implementation of reforms.

Based on the above analysis, the reform of the "English Viewing, Listening & Speaking Training I" course at Tianfu College is a systematic and structured innovation conducted with a profound insight into these challenges and opportunities.

3. Project-Based Reform Model: Deep Practice of PBL Within a Blended Learning Framework

Project-Based Learning (PBL), as a student-centered teaching model, traces its theoretical roots back to the practical-oriented learning philosophy proposed by American educator John Dewey, which emphasizes knowledge construction through practical operations and experience accumulation ("learning by doing").[8] This model stresses placing learning within real-life contextual challenges, requiring students to systematically integrate multi-source information through inquiry, design solutions through collaborative interactions, and achieve knowledge internalization and core competency development during the problem-solving process.

The core of this course reform lies not in using PBL as an embellishment for individual teaching segments but in thoroughly integrating its "outcome-oriented, student-centered, real-task-driven" core principles into the entire "pre-class - in-class - post-class" blended teaching process for unified design.

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3.1 Holistic Design: Project-Based Reconstruction and Deconstruction of Course Objectives and Content

The course teaching team defines the entire semester's learning as a overarching project - "Becoming an Efficient English Communicator" - and deconstructs this grand ultimate goal into three specific, measurable, executable, and assessable stepped sub-projects, each corresponding to different ability dimensions and assigned appropriate weights to collectively constitute the course's total grade.

3.1.1 Sub-Project 1: Platform-Based Comprehensive Listening and Speaking Ability Enhancement Project (36% of Total Grade)

Project Objective: Systematically enhance listening comprehension accuracy, oral expression fluency, and accuracy based on textbook themes.

Project Content and Process: This project is fully synchronized with textbook units.

Pre-Class: Students complete preview tasks for designated unit Section A on the Tsinghua English Online platform, including core vocabulary learning, imitation reading, and basic listening exercises. This stage is equivalent to the project's "information gathering and knowledge preparation." The platform automatically records learning duration, completion, and accuracy data.

In-Class: The teacher first uses 5-10 minutes for targeted explanations and key point clarifications based on platform backend data analysis to address common difficulties and weak areas among the entire class, achieving precise teaching. Subsequently, the classroom focus shifts to high-level interactive tasks in Sections B and C, such as role-plays, group debates, opinion elaborations, and situational simulations centered around the theme. The classroom is no longer a teacher's monologue but a "workshop" for students' project collaboration, knowledge internalization, and outcome generation (oral output).

Post-Class: Students complete extended listening tasks on the platform to consolidate and deepen their learning.

Assessment Method: This method combines process and results, graded on a percentage basis, with the following weight distribution: Textbook learning achievement: 20%□Textbook completion percentage: 40%□ Average score of three homework assignments completed during the semester: 40%.

3.1.2 Sub-Project 2: Baicizhan Vocabulary Expansion Challenge Project (12% of Total Grade)

Project Objective: This project aims to cultivate students' habit of continuously and autonomously expanding their vocabulary, laying a solid foundation for listening and speaking abilities.

Project Content and Process: This is an individual endurance challenge project spanning the entire semester. Students are required to use the Baicizhan app to complete vocabulary learning check-ins at least twice a week, learning no fewer than 10 new words each time. This project emphasizes not short-term cramming but long-term process management and habit formation.

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Assessment Method: At the end of the semester, teachers assess students' vocabulary accumulation sustainability and effectiveness by reviewing their app learning records (e.g., total learning days, total vocabulary) and conducting simple one-on-one vocabulary spot checks through interviews. Meeting basic requirements earns full marks, with encouragement for exceeding them.

3.1.3 Sub-Project 3: Academic Competition Practical Application Project (12% of Total Grade)

Project Objective: This project mainly focuses on testing learning outcomes in real competitive contexts, stimulate learning potential, and cultivate psychological qualities and comprehensive application abilities.

Project Content and Process: The course requires each student to participate in "Vocabulary Competition," one of the three types of competitions: "Vocabulary Competition," "English Speech/Dubbing Competition," or "English Comprehensive Ability Competition." The competition participation process itself constitutes a micro PBL cycle: students set participation goals (project initiation), engage in targeted preparation (inquiry and practice), and participate in the competition (outcome demonstration and evaluation). The progression path from preliminary to semi-final and final rounds perfectly simulates the growth journey from participation to excellence in the real world, greatly enhancing students' sense of achievement and intrinsic motivation.

Assessment Method: This assessment method adopts an incentive-based scoring rule. Participation in the preliminary round earns basic points (e.g., 8 points), with stepped additional points for advancing to semi-finals, finals, and even winning awards, up to full marks and even extra rewards. This ensures participation from all students while providing a pathway for outstanding students to excel.

3.2 Implementation Process: Closed-Loop Management and Refined Operations of "Online + Offline" Interlocking

To ensure the smooth progression of the three sub-projects, the course designs a clear and operable blended teaching process, forming an effective learning closed loop:

3.2.1 Pre-Class Stage (Online - Asynchronous): Project Initiation and Autonomous Inquiry

The teacher releases weekly learning task lists on the Tsinghua English Online platform and WeChat groups at the beginning of each week, clarifying learning objectives, platform task points, and preliminary requirements for classroom group activities. Students autonomously complete Section A's audiovisual and vocabulary learning and initially contemplate the classroom activity theme. The platform's data dashboard provides teachers with "foreknowledge," enabling them to understand students' difficulties in advance and design classroom interactions accordingly. This stage represents the "problem posing" and "knowledge construction" links in PBL.

3.2.2 In-Class Stage (Offline - Synchronous): Collaborative Inquiry and Initial Outcome Emergence

Classroom time is reallocated as follows:

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Targeted Feedback (10-15 minutes): The teacher provides targeted Q&A sessions and addresses difficult points based on platform data.

High-Level Interaction and Collaboration (30-35 minutes): Students form groups to complete challenging tasks designed by the teacher, such as in-depth discussions on certain audiovisual material content, planning and performing short plays, or conducting mock interviews. The teacher's role shifts to a facilitator, coach, and resource provider, offering scaffolding guidance among the groups.

Outcome Demonstration and Feedback (10-15 minutes): Each group selects representatives to demonstrate their discussion results or performance outcomes, accepting questions and evaluations from teachers and peers. This stage represents the "collaborative inquiry," "solution formulation," and "initial demonstration" links in PBL.

3.2.3 Post-Class Stage (Online/Offline Combination): Outcome Deepening and Expansion Transfer

Post-class deepening and expansion tasks specifically include the following aspects:

Consolidation Tasks: Students are required to complete platform-based unit quizzes or extended audiovisual assignments.

Preparation Tasks: These tasks aim to prepare for the next unit's classroom activities.

Competition Project Advancement: Students use spare time to prepare for their vocabulary competitions. Additionally, monthly CET-4 style simulated listening tests are arranged as inspections of phase-specific project outcomes. This stage achieves knowledge consolidation, ability transfer, and sustained learning extension.

4. Evaluation System Reform: Constructing a Diversified, Process-Oriented Formative Evaluation System

Evaluation serves as a guiding baton. This course completely breaks the monopoly of summative evaluation and constructs a diversified formative evaluation system highly compatible with the project-based blended learning model, primarily reflected in the diversification of evaluation subjects and content.[9]

4.1 Diversification of Evaluation Subjects: From Teacher Monologue to Multi-Party Co-Governance

Evaluation is no longer the exclusive privilege of teachers but introduces multiple forces. The platform's automatic scoring system provides objective and fair quantitative data; learning apps like Baicizhan record students' learning trajectories; academic competition judges offer third-party professional evaluations; teachers synthesize classroom observations, group guidance, and platform data for qualitative evaluations; additionally, student self-evaluations and peer evaluations are introduced to promote students' metacognitive abilities and collaborative spirit. This "human-machine combination, internal-external combination, teacher-student combination" evaluation subject structure renders evaluation results more comprehensive and fair.

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4.2 Multi-Dimensionalization of Evaluation Content: From Knowledge Assessment to Comprehensive Ability Portrait

The assessment content covers the entire chain of language learning and all dimensions of course objectives. It assesses not only language input abilities (e.g., platform listening exercises, CET-4 mini-tests) but also emphasizes language output abilities (classroom oral performance); it focuses on not only basic knowledge accumulation (vocabulary projects) but also comprehensive application and innovative thinking (competitions, classroom project outcomes); it highly values not only the final learning results but also the investment in the learning process (platform completion, check-in sustainability). This comprehensive assessment content truly realizes a panoramic portrait of students' language application abilities, learning habits, and comprehensive qualities.

4.3 Differentiated and Incentive-Based Evaluation Standards: Respecting Individual Differences and Stimulating Full Potential

Gardner argues that intelligence is multivariate, context-dependent, and dynamically developing, influenced by cultural environments without inherent superiority or inferiority. Individual intelligence combinations vary, presenting uniquely; even the same intelligence manifests in multiple ways, so a uniform standard cannot evaluate whether someone is intelligent or successful.[10]

Therefore, this course's evaluation standards are not one-size-fits-all but fully reflect the principles of differentiated teaching. For example, in competition projects, basic points ensure the fundamental rights of all students, while advancement additional points create opportunities for high-achieving students to pursue excellence. In classroom performance evaluations, teachers focus on students' progress from their original foundations rather than mere horizontal comparisons. This design itself serves as a powerful teaching incentive tool, enabling students at different starting points to find their growth paths and opportunities for achievement within the course.

5. Preliminary Effectiveness, Reflections, and Future Prospects

After teaching practice in this course, through a comprehensive analysis of student performance data, combining the platform data, this model has achieved remarkable effectiveness.

5.1 Preliminary Effectiveness

5.1.1 Significant Improvement in Student Participation and Initiative

The quality of platform task completion(compared with other platforms) has significantly optimized, with classroom participation and teacher-student interaction levels continuously rising. Students have gradually transformed from knowledge recipients to active constructors and collaborative practitioners of the learning process.

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5.1.2 Tangible Enhancement of Language Output Abilities

Final oral and listening evaluations show noticeable progress in students' language expression fluency, complexity, and content depth and in language comprehension. The number and level of awards won by students participating in English-related competitions have also increased.

5.1.3 Cultivation of Autonomous Learning Abilities and Team Collaboration Awareness

To complete classroom project demonstrations and competitions, students need to autonomously conduct literature review, organize group rehearsals after class, a process that greatly exercises their time management, information retrieval, and team collaboration abilities.

5.2 Existing Challenges and Reflections

Of course, the reform also places higher demands on teachers. Teachers need to invest significant time in course design, resource development, data interpretation, and process guidance, transitioning their roles from "knowledge transmitters" to "course designers, learning facilitators, and data analysts." Simultaneously, how to provide more effective personalized support for students who struggle to adapt in a highly autonomous mode remains an ongoing exploration topic.

5.3 Future Prospects

In the future, this course reform will further deepen in the following aspects. First, introduce learning analysis technology to deeply mine the large data accumulated on the platform, achieving early warning of students' learning difficulties and precise teaching interventions. Second, design more comprehensive and collaborative cross-unit projects, such as having students collaboratively produce an English news program or design a marketing plan for a certain product, thereby more deeply integrating viewing, listening, and speaking skills and strengthening the cultivation of critical thinking and innovative abilities.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the reform practice of the "English Viewing, Listening & Speaking Training I" course at Tianfu College of SWUFE convincingly demonstrates that deeply integrating project-based learning within a blended teaching framework is an effective path for enhancing college English listening and speaking teaching quality. This model not only effectively addresses the drawbacks of traditional teaching but also, more importantly, transforms learning from a passive reception process into an active inquiry, collaborative construction, and achievement-filled project journey, powerfully promoting students' transition towards autonomous, cooperative, and inquiry-based learners. Despite facing challenges, its immense potential in stimulating learning motivation and cultivating comprehensive abilities makes it highly valuable for promotion. This study provides a detailed case for English teaching reforms in similar undergraduate colleges, offering useful references and insights for peers.

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