

Research on the Teaching Design of Deep Blended Learning Model of College English

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Abstract: The era of AI profoundly influences the learning styles of contemporary undergraduates, posing significant challenges and opportunities for college English. This paper takes students from application-oriented universities as the research subjects and focuses on the teaching design of the deep blended learning model in foreign language education. Guided by the concept of Deep Learning, the teacher and students together explore the text from the lower level of knowledge and comprehension to the higher lever of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. It concludes this model has been effective in increasing students' behavioral engagement and enhancing their comprehensive language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and autonomous learning ability.

Keywords: College English; Deep Blended Learning Model; Teaching Design

1. Introduction

Undergraduates, in the digital age, have easy access to the vast amounts of resources related to their textbooks. This undoubtedly broadens their horizons and facilitates the access to information, on the other side, it also poses huge challenges if they want to gain a deep-level knowledge from the fragmented content and to engage in positive learning. The traditional teaching methods fails to draw students' attention or motivate them, since massive knowledge could be quickly obtained from the internet and in reference books. This is especially true for the foreign language teaching. Students are unwilling to gain new words and phrases by rote memory and understand the passage through literal translation. They long for content that can't be found in their textbooks, yearning for teachers' guidance on constructing meaningful and intriguing knowledge systems, that is, teachers should guide students to integrate their previous experiences and backgrounds while fostering a more profound and comprehensive system. Hence, undergraduates could acquire fresh perspectives and insights from every single class so as to ignite their curiosity. It is imperative for educators to guide students in Deep Learning, a concept where learners could assimilate new knowledge and concepts critically based on the comprehension of learning materials actively. Also, they integrate them into their existing cognitive structures, apply them in novel problem-solving contexts, making decisions and resolving problems [1]. This paper lays emphasis on the educational philosophy of Deep Learning and showcases a classroom design centered on Text A My Misspent Youth from Unit 3 Managing Personal Finances in Integrated Course III from New Advanced College English released by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, to demonstrate how this approach can be implemented.

2. Teaching Subjects

The teaching subjects are the non-English major sophomores, majored in Chinese Language and Literature from Xi'an Peihua University. There are a total of two classes. The majority of the students primarily come from various regions within Shaanxi province, including cities such as Xi'an, Xianyang, Baoji, Ankang, Hanzhong and their subordinate counties.

Students from private universities are admitted with the lowest scores at the undergraduate level [2]. They could write down simple English sentences with very single patterns. They always struggle to output the complex English sentence structures in writing. In English reading, they fail to summarize core information from passages once the material exceeds three lines. All of which demonstrate learners could extract certain textual information. However, their capacity to analyze and grasp intricate English sentence structures is limited. Not only does this restriction hinder their deep understanding of the text, but also impedes their ability to produce sophisticated language outputs and enhance their critical

thinking.

3. Teaching Objectives

According to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, the teaching objectives of this unit are categorized into knowledge, skills, and affective objectives.

Knowledge Objectives: Students will be able to: 1) Memorize and master some English vocabulary and phrases related to the theme of finance and consumption (knowledge). 2) Understand the significance of personal financial planning and its impact on individual life and future development (Comprehension).

Skills Objectives: Students will be able to: 1) master the writing technique of flashbacks. 2) enhance their ability to resolve personal financial crises. 3) analyze and summarize the main ideas of texts, comprehend the logical relationships between paragraphs, and guess the meanings of new words based on context. 4) formulate their own opinions and attitudes based on textual content, enhancing critical thinking skills.

Affective Objectives (Ideological and Political Objectives): Students will be able to: 1) strengthen the sense of economic independence and self-management skills. 2) cultivate good habits of thrift and diligence, fostering a correct outlook on consumption.

Revolving around Text A *My Misspent Youth*, the specific learning objectives can be elaborated as follows:

Knowledge Objectives: Students will be able to: 1) learn and memorize English words and expressions related to youth, growth, consumption, and social phenomena that appear in the text, thereby enriching their linguistic repertoire (Knowledge). 2) comprehend the themes explored in the text, such as the struggles of youth, individual growth, life options between living in big cities or small towns, personal identity and the sense of belonging (comprehension). 3) have a correct view on the value of confusion, challenges in the process of growth (application). 4) understand and explore the viewpoints and attitudes expressed by the author, Meghan Daum, in the text. Furthermore, they will identify how the author illustrates these viewpoints through specific examples and details (analysis).

Skills Objectives: Students will be able to: 1) comprehend the logical relationships between paragraphs and analyze specific details by utilizing the narrative technique of flashbacks. 2) Actively ponder on the information and content presented in the text, critically evaluating its rationality and credibility, and forming their own opinions and insights, ultimately improving their critical thinking skills.

Affective Objectives (Ideological and Political Objectives): Students will be able to: 1) cultivate the virtuous traits of "no comparison, no extravagance or waste" and "A gentleman loves wealth, takes it wisely, and uses it in moderation", thereby establishing a correct outlook on consumption. 2) develop positive values such as cherishing their youth, bravely facing challenges, actively pursuing the meaningful life, and fostering personal growth.

4. Teaching Method

Traditional teaching methods contribute to negative classroom silence. The cramming education leads to reduction of student participation in the classroom [3]. Therefore, blended learning approach is mainly adopted. The teacher should consciously create a competing atmosphere to stimulate students' impulse to practice English and earn scores

The teacher just utilizes Mosoteach (a platform designed specifically for interactive teaching and learning between teachers and students) to distribute learning tasks, including videos and audio materials linked to theme of the unit, preview questions, translated text, language points, and other relevant content.

The final score of in-class interaction content will be graded based on the ranking of students' empirical value from Mosoteach, which helps prevent some students from trying to get by with minimal effort and encourages them to study diligently.

5. Teaching Procedures

Given their relatively weaker foundation, every time the teacher wants to raise question, she would commence from textual information, ensuring 80% of students could find the right answer and creating

a relaxed learning atmosphere in the classroom to the greatest extent. The questions, then, proceed from easy to difficult, helping students integrate scattered information into a systematic and logical framework in their minds, and promote deep learning.

5.1 Autonomous Learning to Enhance Self-study Ability

Before class, the teacher uploaded relevant video and audio resources and related to managing personal for unit 3, requiring students to watch video at least 2 or 3 times to achieve the effect of listening practice. Additionally, the preview questions and translated version of *My Misspent Youth*, and language points, are also provided for students to learn autonomously, grasping the main content in advance. This is because for a text of approximately 1455 words, without prior preparation, most students will struggle to keep up with the pace of the class, fail to comprehend accurately, and be unable to participate in the class interaction effectively.

5.2 Knowledge Inquiry: Offline Leading-in to Activate Background Knowledge and Enhance Language Expression Ability

The success of a lesson largely relies on its leading-in part. A well-designed introduction serves as a prerequisite for an effective classroom session [4]. The teacher should select video content that could resonate with student' lives, activating their prior experience and stimulating their interest.

With the theme of managing personal finances, the teacher plays the video "How to Build a Strong Financial Foundation during College Years" and prompts students to ponder on related questions. 1) "According to the video, what are the three steps that college students can take to manage their money responsibly?" This question is straightforward; once students identify clues within the text, such as "The first step is...; Next, students need to...; It's also important to..." the answer becomes apparent. 2) "What does the phrase 'in the black' most likely mean?" This requires students to integrate the context, where expressions like "College students are notorious for being short on cash and overspending...But with a few smart moves, students can stay in the black and out of financial trouble" suggest a bleak financial situation among students. How do students transform their situation when taking wise actions? To escape financial difficulties. Based on the Spreading Activation Model, the teacher guides students to focus on the semantic relationships between information, deriving the antonymous meaning of "maintaining a surplus." Additionally, the teacher adds to remind students of the symbolic significance of red color in daily life, as in grading assignments, recording financial data, or the decline of stock prices, where "in the red" signifies a deficit.

Through the previous interactions, the following topics are naturally introduced: 1) How much are your monthly living expenses? 2) What constitutes the majority of your daily expenses? 3) What is the primary source of funding for your daily expenses? 4) Do you have a daily budget? Do you keep track of your daily spending?

Students will find that their monthly living expenses vary slightly. According to the survey, surrounding students mainly come from local areas within the province of modest family. The majority of students in the classroom have monthly living expenses of around 1200 yuan, but there are also those with 1000 yuan, even 2000 yuan, or up to 3000 yuan. Students themselves mention that the amount of living expenses depends on their lifestyle. If there are no additional expenses and they maintain a simple school life, such as meals, fruits, phone bills, etc., 1200 yuan is sufficient. However, if they want to enrich their college life with activities like weekend shopping, dining out, pursuing branded items, traveling nearby, etc., they may need more.

When discussing this topic, the teacher grasps the opportunity to point out although a few students work part-time jobs, their primary financial source is mainly from their parents. At this point, the seemingly glamorous appearance and comfortable life are not worth boasting, as they are not the result of the students' own efforts. Instead, students, during college, should strive for inner growth, such as acquiring extensive knowledge, cultivating good character and ethics, maintaining physical and mental health, developing stable emotion management skills, and enhancing empathy. These aspects will better mould their future, and they are what are students should truly compete with. As this is mentioned, many students' facial expressions visibly brighten.

5.3 Comprehension Inquiry: Extract Important Clues, Sort out the Theme Structure of the Text, Deepening Students' Understanding Ability

Under the influence of traditional teaching modes, students often follow routines translating the text word by word. At this point, the scaffolding role of the teacher is embodied in helping students construct the main structure of the text from a macro perspective and summarize the content of the whole text. In view of the Schema Theory and based on the accumulation of Chinese language knowledge in primary and middle schools, students can easily find this passage does not describe events in the conventional chronological order. To attract readers' attention, the author adopts the writing technique of flashbacks, placing the outcome of the event at the beginning of the text and then recording it according to the sequence of event development.

Sorting out the main plot in sequence is by no means an easy task for students, especially when it comes to identifying each time and its corresponding event. Under the guidance of the teacher, a clear boundary between the chronological order and the flashbacks is existed to avoid confusing readers, the teacher guides students to divide the text based on time cues and then focuses on the semantics and logical relationships within each segment. Typically, students are skilled in finding superficial and obvious cues but struggle with implicit relationships and deeper connections.

For example, in P.12, the text mentions at this time, she fell into a debt crisis. Students can easily trace the cause to the necessary expenses of daily life such as telecommunications, internet, and media. However, they may neglect the content mentioned in P.4, where the author insists to pursue a tasteful lifestyle, which is bound to be reflected in her later life. Therefore, the exquisite life represented by expensive martinis and dinners is actually the last straw that breaks the camel's back.

Another example is the last paragraph. Students can easily find the time cue "several months ago" in P.13) indicating she decided to move out of New York several months ago. However, they may not point out her accurate age at that time. Under the guidance of the teacher, the last paragraph echoes the opening content. P. 3 mentions "I'm twenty-nine years old, and I am completely over my head in debt." "When I was seventeen..." (P.1). "...It was the summer of 1987" (P.2). From which, it can be deduced the year mentioned is 1999 and her corresponding age is 29.

Guided of the teacher, students can better focus on the logical relationships between paragraphs and deepen their understanding of the text. Once all the temporal relationships are sorted out, the teacher can naturally ask the theme, "What does the passage mainly talk about?" With a clear understanding of the context, students could summarize the passage covers the initial yearning for New York City, the pursuit of a high-quality life, the continuous pursuit of dreams and facing challenges in the workplace during their studies, living up to her youth, and ultimately leading to a debt crisis and a miserable situation. From this perspective, when asked about their understanding of the title *My Misspent Youth*, students can easily point out the perception of "misspent" is judged based on the outcome. Connecting with the unit theme, students can also summarize one of the purposes of this article is to advise undergraduates to do what is possible.

5.4 Application Inquiry: Embedding Knowledge into Familiar Contexts, Cultivating Language Transfer Competence

When imparting the main content, the problem-oriented approach would introduce the topic to a familiar situation, cultivating the practical application ability of the language, and deepen their insight of the text. When discussing P.4, the teacher first asks students, "Why did the author insist on living in such a big city and buying expensive things?" By posing this question, students can swiftly locate the answers, "her career can thrive better in a big city, and expensive items are the entire point—the point of being young, the point of living in New York City, the point of living."

The teacher further inquires whether students have a same preference for purchasing expensive products. Some students may express while branded goods are more costly, yet they offer better quality. Additionally, they might mention high-end brands also reflect the "face" culture prevalent in society. Others may mention they sometimes felt lost and lacked self-affirmation during their college years. Expensive things are also good things to a certain extent, which can better express oneself, define identity, promote belonging and self-confidence. Upon hearing these perspectives, the teacher nods in acknowledgment before adding this recognition stems not only from external evaluation, but also from inner self-affirmation. Placing undue importance on others' opinions can, over time, hinder the appreciation of oneself, that is, they can't find a genuine sense of belonging and happiness.

5.5 Analysis Inquiry: Delving into Connotation of the Text, Comprehending Logical Structure in-depth

There are 2 specific places portraying the student's living conditions in the text. As for P.6 and P.7, the teacher poses the questions: "How did she view her life after graduation?" Upon graduation, the author moved into a shared apartment in Manhattan, pursuing her dream despite of financial constraints yet finding simplicity and joy. In the early preview, students may glance over these details due to habitual reading patterns, lacking a profound analysis of the raw material, which attributes to the Information Processing Theory, where brief attention to external information fails to sustain long-term retention in memory. With the hint from the teacher, an annual salary of \$18,000 indicates \$1,500 monthly, while \$550 is allocated to rent, consuming one-third of her earnings. Applying the Schema Theory, students naturally recognize in addition to rent, transportation, utilities, and communication expenses also constitute basic necessities. With daily meals, fruits, and commodities, there is little left. If the author wants to enrich her life with leisure activities such as shopping, or socializing, she could only live frugally. Such speculation echoes the paragraph's conclusion, where "eating ramen noodles and ninety-nine-cent White Rose macaroni and cheese" makes end meet. These details are mentioned in the flashback. Students are guided to find corresponding elements in the chronological narrative, which is a true portrayal of "getting by" and "keeping up appearances" in P3. Through the exploration, students deepen their understanding of the logical relationships between paragraphs, bridging new knowledge with existing concepts. Ultimately, when asked "What supported her to move forward?" students could easily connect to the power of faith, which serves as a spiritual anchor during adversity, fueling the pursuit of dreams.

5.6 Synthesis Inquiry: Integrating Contextual Information, Forming an Objective and Comprehensive Understanding

When the teacher asks to evaluate the author's self-reliant life during her graduate studies in P.9, "how would you describe her life in 1994?" Students initially identify superficial details such as her various part-time jobs—working for an anthropology professor at \$9 per hour, reading manuscripts at \$9 an hour, working at a university press for \$10 dollars an hour, and doing temp work for \$17 an hour. These seemingly insignificant amounts are actually the footprints of the author's struggle. She even lived on \$34 for three weeks, which may seem normal on the surface, but when it is compared to 21 days, the average living expenses are less than \$2 a day, and the macaroni is almost \$1, showing she always struggles with hunger. Furthermore, the image of her walking to school in frozen winter, slipping and falling three times, really touches students.

At this time, the teacher once again asks students about their understanding of the title, "do you think she wasted her youth?" Few people think so. Instead, they recognize her unwavering commitment to earning her tuition and supporting herself through sheer determination, resilience, competence, and hard work. However, there are also those who oppose her to secretly stealing her roommates' food, suggesting seeking help openly would have been a more appropriate behavior. In this discussion, students' understanding of the concept of "misspent" is based on the process, their comprehension of the author is multidimensional, and their evaluation of her is based on the analysis of the text, not blindly affirming or negating, but with the nature of questioning and criticism. Students' critical thinking ability has been improved.

5.7 Evaluation Inquiry: Stimulating Students' Active Thinking and Fostering Critical Thinking Competence

When discussing the author's dire financial situation, where her expenses exceeded her income, a question centers on "Do you think whether she should leave NY and move to Lincoln, Nebraska? If it were you, how would you like to choose?" Students differ on their opinion. Some argues one should act within one's ability and avoid being too stubborn. They note with an annual pre-tax income of approximately 55,000 and her debts exceeding 75,000, she should cut her losses promptly. In an era of rapid globalization and technological advancements, they reason loving NY doesn't mean she must liver there, while frequent visits to New York are wiser. Others believes that, being alone in the city, the author could consider returning to her hometown of New Jersey, where her parents and friends reside and her life would be more comfortable. They emphasize the importance of not only considering oneself solely but also being responsible for one's family.

Those oppose to leaving argue that the toughest time have already been over, and since the author

owns a home, things are bound to improve. Some add by adjusting her lavish lifestyle, the author could remarkably enhance her quality. Others point out her educational background, a graduate from a reputable university. Her employment at NYU and her status as a full-time freelance writer indicate her competency and ample room for career advancement. They argue the debts are temporary, and giving up on such a promising future would be regrettable. Some highlight the unique benefits of living in a world-class city like New York, citing its unparalleled educational, cultural, economic, and international influence, which greatly would enrich one's perspectives and understanding.

The teacher finally concludes the path of life has been walked by oneself with no absolute right or wrong. However, comprehensive consideration is crucial before making decisions. The passage is a superior reference, offering a vivid portrayal of the work and life of contemporary graduates after leaving the campus. The struggles and choices between the hustle and bustle of metropolises and the tranquility of smaller cities has been reflected. Students could gain insights early on and make choices based on their interests, preference, and needs.

The enhancement of higher-order thinking skills primarily comprises four levels of thought: practical application, effective analysis, integrative thinking, and comprehensive evaluation [5]. Through gradual discussion between the teacher and students, the concept and practice of Deep Learning runs through the entire process.

6. Conclusion

The study of college English courses primarily depends on unit themes and textual content. However, when teachers are imparting knowledge, more than just literal understanding should be gained by learners. Rather, the cultivation of their critical thinking skills, learning methods, and the ability to autonomously construct their own knowledge systems should be prioritized. Through the study of various thematic units, students gradually master learning techniques that allow them to transcend the original passages, constructing thematic ideas from a macro perspective. This, in turn, leads to deeper exploration and contemplation of related issues, ultimately achieving the effects of deep learning.

Acknowledgment

This paper is supported by the project on "14th Five-Year Plan" Educational Science Planning in Shaanxi Province in 2022. The Project No. is SGH22Y1848. The title of the project is A Study on the Construction of a Deep Blended Learning Model for College English Driven by Students' Growth Needs.

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