

Research on High School Students' English Learning Engagement Based on Blended Learning Mode

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Abstract: Under the traditional teaching mode, the phenomenon of “mute English” is common in high school students' English teaching, which leads to the low engagement of English learning. The development of “Internet + education” provides a new idea of blended learning mode. Teachers can explore how to improve high school students' engagement in English learning under the blended learning mode from four aspects: the integration of teaching forms, the change of learning process, the improvement of evaluation system and the creation of English learning environment.

1. Introduction

Due to the limitation of the language environment, the English teaching effect needs to be improved in China. Even after more than ten years of learning, students in high school still have difficulty in speaking English fluently. There are quite a few reasons leading to this result, the root of which is the lack of the ability of applying language. In particular, the “teacher-centered” teaching mode makes English teaching more boring and tedious. Students are likely to get tired of learning, with low engagement in English learning, which is the major reason why English learning is less effective.

With the wide application of information technology in teaching, online teaching integrating the Internet, artificial intelligence and other new technologies has become an important developing trend of Education at home and abroad. Learning is no longer limited to the classroom. Self-directed learning, online learning, has gradually become a popular way of learning. Under the blended learning mode, a new and diversified learning mode can be formed by integrating the teaching form, learning processes, assessment system and learning environment to maximize the engagement of high school students in English learning.

2. Study on students' Learning Engagement Based on Blended Learning Mode At Home and Abroad

At present, researches abroad on learner engagement mainly focus on its concept connotation, the investigation, the influencing factors and strategies. In the 1930s, Tyler proposed the concept of task time, which initiated a series of empirical studies on learner engagement. In 1992, Newmann defined the concept of learning engagement, pointing out that learning engagement is not only

about attending lectures and accomplishing assignments, but also about students' emotional factors [1]. In China, professor Kong Qiping (2000) introduced the concept of “learning engagement” to China for the first time in his article named *The Concept connotation and Structure of student engagement*[2]. Sun Weiwen (2009) believes that learning engagement is the level at which students would be able to use cognitive strategies in the learning process and the quality of the emotional experience they create [3]. Zhang Na (2012) pointed out that learning engagement refers to the learning process in which students actively participate in various activities, enthusiastically face setbacks and challenges, and think deeply about questions [4]. The study of learning engagement has gone through a process where it turns into qualitative change from quantitative one, and it tends to recognize and measure students' learning engagement from a comprehensive perspective.

In research on how to promote students' learning engagement, it is widely recognized that Chickering et al. (1987) proposed “Seven Principles of Effective Teaching in Undergraduate Education”, which explained seven effective teaching principles that have an impact on students' learning engagement and effect[5]. Fredricks et al. (2004) divided learning engagement into three independent dimensions which is behavioral engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement, pointing out that factors such as family, community, cultural environment and educational environment directly affect students' learning engagement degree[6]. Zhu Hongcan (2014) analyzed the influencing factors of college students' learning engagement in classroom from three aspects, namely, personal factors, interpersonal relationships and school environment, and found that students' personal factors were the capital factors influencing college students' learning engagement [7].

In terms of measurement of students' learning engagement, the most influential one is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in United States. College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) designed by Page has also become a reference standard for a large number of researchers. Schaufel et al. (2002) mainly studied the learning engagement of college students, and the evaluation items included three dimensions of vitality, dedication and concentration [8]. The “Online learning Engagement Scale” prepared by Dixson (2010) explores the learning engagement in the online learning environment from the four dimensions of skills, emotion, participation and performance. Zhang Zhi and Chen Zhenxiong (2016) et al. conducted a survey on college students by using a scale and found that there was the obviously negative correlation between learning boredom and learning engagement [9].

With the gradual development of blended learning and the increasing attention paid to learning engagement, some scholars have carried out studies on learning engagement based on blended learning. But the quantities of relevant articles are still minor and its contents are largely focused on the recent period from the literature review. Gong Shaoying (2017) discussed the mediating effect of motivation regulation on motivation belief and learning engagement in a blended learning environment from the perspective of motivation, and concluded that motivational belief of college students can indirectly affect learning engagement through motivation regulation [10]. Zhou Yuan et al. (2018) promote learners' engagement in learning through blended learning activity design, and manifest the blended ratio of face-to-face teaching and online learning in blended learning [11]. Liu Tao and Su Danrui (2018) studied the evaluation system of deep learning in blended learning environment from the perspective of deep learning, so as to promote learners' full emotional involvement [12]. Professor Zhang Yi (2019) measured the classroom learning engagement of college students in a blended teaching environment, and found that the interaction between teachers and students under technical support, teachers' application ability of information technology, technology acceptance and cognitive load had an impact on students' behavioral engagement [13]. Jia Fei et al. (2019) believed that blended learning and online learning played a positive role in stimulating students' engagement and improving their academic performance, and made an in-depth

study on how online learning environment perform a active function in student learning [14].Ma Jing (2020) studied the relationship between teachers' teaching behavior and college students' learning engagement in a blended teaching environment by creation of the questionnaire [15]. It can be seen that although different learners associate blended learning with learning engagement from different perspectives, their ultimate goal is to improve the degree of learning engagement in blended learning.

At present, domestic researches on English learning engagement focus on a single learning environment, and mainly on English education of college students. There is still a lack of research on high school students' learning engagement in blended learning mode which is worth researching for the sake of improving English instruction in high school.

3. The Influencing Factors of High School students'English Learning Engagement

The engagement of English learning is mainly influenced by three factors, namely, personal factors, interpersonal relationship factors and learning environment factors, all of which restrict and influence each other.

3.1 Personal Factors of High School Students

In the process of English learning, students are the main body of English learning, so their personal factors have a great impact on learning engagement. Personal factors include the needs and learning goals of themselves, their emotions and self-control, biological and genetic factors, etc. Due to the differences in their own personal factors, high school students will also show diverse levels of engagement in learning.

The strong English learning needs and goals of high school students can make them more actively participate in English-related teaching activities (behavioral engagement). The cheerful mood makes it easier for students to involve in English learning, and also enables middle school students to confront difficulties bravely and study actively. Phant believes that the two genders show distinct interest in education so that male and female students have different interest in the same course [16]. Yang Rongli also believed that there were differences in the application of English learning strategies between male and female students [17]. So does English learning. Different students have different ways to learn English so that the degree of engagement in English learning can also vary significantly.

3.2 Interpersonal Relationship Factors of High School Students

In the process of learning English, middle school students were likely to be influenced by their peers and teachers to change the degree of learning engagement. From the perspective of social identity theory, individuals are eager to be accepted so that they can be recognized by the group. A harmonious relationship between teachers and students is characterized by the close interaction of students and teachers. According to English learning content, middle school students interact with English teachers through conversation in English classroom instruction, communication and cooperation activities, and actively participate in the learning of English-related content. What's more, communication with peers and peers' interest and engagement in English will have an impact on middle school students' English learning, especially when it comes to language learning. The most crucial matter in English learning is the use of language. During the communication with peers, it can lead middle school students to put what they have learned into practice and enhance their ability of using English.

3.3 Learning Environment Factors of Middle School Students

The influencing factors of learning environment include the environment of family, school and society. Middle school students' study and life are under the supervision and guidance of their families, and family environment is the potential influence of their engagement in English learning. Parents' expectations are one of the sources of students' efforts. Children in families with English atmosphere have different engagement in English learning from ordinary families. In addition, the emphasis placed on English learning by school and social environment will also affect students' engagement in English learning. The development of school English activities indirectly or directly promotes the English learning engagement of middle school students. There are more foreigners living or working in developed areas, that is, there is a relatively better language environment. Middle school students in this region have better command of English so that the degree of English learning engagement would be higher.

4. Advantages of English Teaching in High School Based on Blended Learning Mode

The blended learning mode regards students as the main body and makes them actively participate in English teaching activities. Personalized learning meets the needs of students with different personalities and learning styles, enabling them to take the initiative to learn. With the help of information technology, students can study no matter where they are and what time it is, making their study more efficient.

4.1 Students-Oriented Learning

The most fundamental difference between blended learning mode and traditional teaching mode lies in the subject of learning. In the traditional model, the teacher is the main body of the class, and the students' learning initiative and engagement are low. However, in the blended learning mode, it is students who are the main part of learning and would actively participate in the whole process of English teaching. Especially in the era of information technology, the Internet provides students with more abundant learning resources. Teachers play a guiding role in this process, who are leading students to learn in a more efficient way.

4.2 Personalized Learning

It is common in traditional classes that there are likely to be oversized classes which accommodate a large number of students, and inflexible learning time, place and progress, etc. In addition, traditional teaching tends to adopt the “spoon-feeding” teaching mode, in which teachers fill the knowledge with students regardless of their needs and ability of learning. What they do is to passively accept knowledge so that more attention are paid to grammar and vocabulary in English. Constrained by the large number of students, teachers are not able to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, even though each student has his or her own learning style. Fortunately, it is the blended learning mode that can provide individual learning opportunities for each student, enabling them to learn actively, autonomously and individually, and to strengthen their learning based on their weaknesses and interests.

4.3 Efficient Learning

Under the blended learning mode, students can seek for a variety of learning resources through the Internet so that they would be able to break through the limitation of time and space, and study

repeatedly anytime and anywhere, breaking the disadvantage of traditional classroom which displays only once. Through big data on the Internet, students and teachers can have a clear understanding of learning situation. As far as students are concerned, data can help them quickly identify their own weaknesses and find a more efficient way to reinforce related knowledge, rather than concentrate themselves on questions of tests or exams as students do in traditional teaching. It saves time for students to have a better understanding of their English learning. As far as teachers are concerned, big data is conducive to timely feedback of students' blind spots, so that teachers have a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of students' learning in English.

5. How to Improve High School students' English Learning Engagement Based on Blended Learning Mode

By integrating the advantages of blended learning mode with the characteristics of English teaching, teachers can improve the English learning engagement of middle school students from four aspects: the integration of teaching mode, the change of learning process, the improvement of evaluation system and the creation of English learning environment.

5.1 The Integration of English Teaching Modes under the Blended Learning Mode

Under the traditional teaching mode, listening carefully to the teacher is the most important activity of classroom learning, even though this activity is not all things to all people, which is one of the important reasons for restricting the degree of high school students' engagement in English learning. Therefore, under the blended learning mode, it is indispensable to make full use of the advantages of the blended learning mode to integrate English teaching forms, so as to realize the unification of online teaching and offline teaching. Teachers should integrate existing resources, textbooks and the current evaluation system, and combine offline classroom teaching with online network teaching to form a mutually complementary and coordinated teaching system. In the blended learning mode, it would be better to follow the principles of gradient, repetition, interaction, appropriateness and lifelong benefit when designing blended English learning tasks. It can be taken into consideration that what role the tasks can play is to provide teaching support for students, control their cognitive load, stimulate their emotional engagement, promote their learning engagement, and make them actively participate in learning activities.

With regard to the uneven quality of network resources, teachers would spare no efforts to help middle school students to sort out and distinguish from them. It is necessary to guide students to develop their own personalized learning plans and promote their independent learning. Based on learning community-centered, it provides students with an opportunity of intuitive communication and exchange with teachers no matter when they are online or offline, which makes them in an atmosphere of mutual trust and open communication [18]. It helps middle school students learn English in cooperation and builds up corresponding knowledge and skills in English.

5.2 Changes in English Learning Process under Blended Learning Mode

English learning is generally divided into three periods: before class, while class and after class. However, in the traditional teaching mode, teachers tend to ignore the first and last stages, and cannot fully play the role of each stage. The application of blended learning mode can make full use of the three stages so as to improve students' engagement in English learning.

In the pre-class period, teachers can summarize the difficult points in the textbook in advance. After that, relevant resources are integrated which will be provided to students through the online platform. It's required to learn before class. Students need to find out their own problems from these

materials given online. The questions proposed by students will be displayed in class. In class, teachers use multimedia resources to design teaching tasks to examine students' learning outcomes before class, and conduct relevant explanations and exercises. Students would actively participate in this process, give full play to their subjective initiative, study for settling their own problems down, and further solve their own confusion through communication with classmates and teachers. After class, teachers would focus more on giving feedback to and solving students' problems that have not been figured out in class. In the meantime, students would concentrate themselves on completing the corresponding exercises to consolidate what they have learned on the learning software [19].

In the whole three-stage learning process, teachers would pay attention to the strategic guidance of middle school students' independent learning process. On the one hand, it is necessary to guide students to make a distinction between English language learning and other subjects' knowledge learning. On the other hand, it is significant to make students conscious that language learning is permanent and persistent in order to evaluate oneself and dynamically reflect on the behavior of self-learning and dynamically make an adjustment to the learning strategies and learning methods. The final purpose is to achieve the self-management of English learning, and develop an autonomous learning strategy suitable for their learning style, personality characteristics and educational background.

5.3 The Improvement of English Evaluation System under the Blended Learning Mode

The evaluation system of the English curriculum in traditional teaching mode is too unitary to reflect the learning situation of every student in middle school. Single evaluation system is not scientific enough, and cannot mobilize the enthusiasm of middle school students to participate in learning. Under the blended learning mode, teachers apply the "Internet + big data" technology to building a comprehensive evaluation system that integrates teacher evaluation, peer assessment and student's self-evaluation. It is teachers, students and other parties who participate in the formulation of learning plans, supervision of learning process and evaluation of learning. At the same time, as the subject of learning, students' evaluation of their own learning is particularly important during the whole learning process where students would comprehensively observe, measure and evaluate themselves, understand their own learning strengths, analyze their own weaknesses, and make targeted learning improvements. In the evaluation of overall learning outcomes, teachers and students comp up with the difficulties in learning together, so as to make an adjustment to learning methods and strategies, and finally achieve the improvement of the learning engagement level.

5.4 The Creation of English Learning Environment under the Blended Learning Mode

For a long time, the school requires a relatively English learning environment in other occasions except for English classes. However, based on blended learning mode, English learning can happen everywhere and everytime which enables students experience the intense atmosphere of English learning. Teachers can organize related learning tasks online and offline to create learning atmosphere. At the same time, the online virtual learning environment can largely eliminate students' fear of speaking English and English learning. Students can choose corresponding learning tasks according to their English proficiency which gives full play to their initiative to an extreme, cultivates their confidence in English learning, and improves learning efficiency. In addition to creating a learning atmosphere, the basic hardware environment of the school urgently need to be updated to ensure of smoothly ongoing blended learning [20].

6. Conclusion

The application of blended learning mode in middle school students' English learning is an inevitable trend of The Times and the development of society. Under the influence of blended learning mode, the English teaching method, the learning process, the evaluation system and the learning environment should be transformed accordingly. In addition, blended learning mode pays more attention to the use of modern technology whose diversity coincides with students who have different learning strategies and thinking habits. Therefore, the application of blended learning mode in the teaching of middle school English can effectively increase the enthusiasm and promote the initiative of middle school students in learning English, so as to improve their engagement in Learning English.

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