

The Construction and Practice of Digitized College English Teaching Based on “WE Learn”

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Abstract: With the rapid development of information age and information technology, people are expected to have information literacy, and they should have the capacity to search, select, classify, utilize, manage, exchange information. College teacher and students, who are highly educated and regarded as the representatives of modern knowledge, information, technology and skills, should all be equipped with information literacy. In college, English class is of great significance, and its teaching output efficiency is an important index for foreign language teaching. In traditional English class, the class capacity is huge and the teacher is the center of the classroom, so students are imparted knowledge passively; however, by employing digital teaching platform such as “WE Learn”, the learning efficiency and teaching effectiveness can be improved significantly. The essay aims to explore the digitized teaching model with the application of “WE Learn” digital teaching platform. The research process of the digitized teaching consists of three stages: pre-class, in-class, post-class, with each stage featuring diversified digitized teaching tasks to enhance the students’ digital learning capabilities. As a result, digitized English teaching model by “WE Learn” platform not only enables the students to have information literacy, but also enhances their interests, motivation, output, achievements of foreign language learning.

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of information technology and the gradual formation of an information society, people have become aware of the importance of information in solving problems and making decisions.

In 1974, Paul G. Zurkowski (Chairman of the U.S. Information Industry Association) first proposed the concept of “information literacy”, which he initially elaborated in a report submitted to the US National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.[1]

Since Zurkowski first proposed the concept of information literacy, numerous professional scholars and institutions from various countries have conducted extensive theoretical research and discussions on the connotation of information literacy, continuously deepening its meaning. Especially after 1980, with the widespread application of computer technology, the connection between information literacy and computer networks has become increasingly close.

Based on the practice of English Teaching and the Learning Platform (WE Learn), this essay endeavors to reform the traditional English teaching mode, and by incorporating information literacy and digital technology into English teaching, it explores how to elevate the students' learning interest, learning capacity, and learning effect, and it also aims to enhance the teaching efficiency, teaching output of English instruction.

2. Research Background

2.1 Information Literacy Abroad

Information is the key to rapidly changing economies in the 21st century and, as a result, it is expected that people are competent in a variety of information literacy skills, which enable efficient and effective activities such as selecting, utilizing, applying, managing, and exchanging information.[2][3]

Zurkowski (1974) believed that “individuals who, after training, can apply information technology to their work possess information literacy. They have acquired the skills and techniques to utilize a wide range of information tools and primary resources to construct solutions to information problems.”[1] In 1987, information scientist Patricia Brevik summarized information literacy as “understanding the information system, being able to identify the value of information, selecting the best channels for acquiring information, and mastering the basic skills for obtaining and storing information”, such as the capacity to effectively utilize databases, spreadsheet software, and word processing software. In 1989, the American Library Association (ALA) concisely summarized information literacy as “the ability to recognize when information is needed and to know how to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information”. In 1990s, with the development of network technology and the advent of the information age dominated by the knowledge economy, people gained new interpretations of the connotation of information literacy.

In 2003 and 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held two thematic world conferences and issued the Prague Declaration and the Alexandria Declaration, respectively, defining information literacy as a capability, namely, “Information literacy is a prerequisite for people to survive in the information society and the information age. It is an important factor for lifelong learning and can help individuals and organizations achieve various goals for their survival and development. It enables individuals to identify, locate, evaluate, organize, and effectively produce, use, and communicate information to solve problems”. In 2015, the Standards Committee of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, US) approved the “Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education”, defining information literacy as a comprehensive ability and presenting five new standards for determining information literacy: (1) The ability to determine the nature and scope of the information needed (2) The ability to effectively acquire the information (3) The ability to evaluate information and its sources, and to integrate selected information with one's own knowledge base and value system (4) The ability to apply information to achieve specific purposes (5) The ability to understand the economic, legal, and social issues involved in the use of information, and the self-conscious adherence to ethical norms and relevant laws when acquiring and utilizing information.[4]

2.2 Information Literacy in China

In China, the demand for information literate individuals is becoming an important national strategy for economic and social development.[5]

For many years, China has continuously promoted the digital development of education. The

Ministry of Education released the first “Ten-Year Development Plan for Education Informatization (2011-2020)” in 2012, followed by the “Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Education Informatization” in 2016, and the “Action Plan for Education Informatization 2.0” in 2018. These are all milestones in China’s educational digitalization development. In 2017, the Chinese government advocated to “running online education well”. Subsequently, the “Chinese Education Modernization 2035” and the “Implementation Plan to Accelerate the Modernization of Education (2018-2022)” were successively issued. Since then, China’s educational digitalization development has entered a fast lane.

Empowering university teaching with digital technology is an important path to achieving digitalized teaching. According to the “Specifications for Digital Campus Construction in Colleges and Universities (Trial)” released by the Ministry of Education in March 2021, “information literacy refers to an individual’s awareness, ability, thinking, and cultivation in appropriately utilizing information technology to acquire, integrate, manage, and evaluate information, to understand, construct, and create new knowledge, and to identify, analyze, and solve problems”.

The arrival of the “Internet E+” era has promoted the application of digital information technology in college English teaching. Effective utilization of digital information technology and digital resources in college English teaching has led to richer and more open foreign language teaching resources, a shift in students’ learning state from passive learning to autonomous learning, and a transformation of teaching methods from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one which encourages students to actively participate in teaching activities and exert their subjective initiative[6]. Foreign language teachers in the information age must not only possess language teaching abilities but also enhance their digital literacy”[7].

The 2020 edition of the College English Teaching Guide released by the Ministry of Education, regarding teaching methods for college English, states that English teachers should give full play to the modern educational technology, especially modern information technology, in English teaching, and vigorously promote the deep integration of modern information technology with curriculum teaching.[8] With the prevalence of campus networks and the powerful functionality of smartphones, mobile phones have become essential tools for daily life and learning among college students. English teachers should make full use of mobilephone apps and integrate them into the digitized teaching and learning of college English [9].

2.3 The Digitized Teaching Platform “WE Learn”

This research utilizes the “WE Learn” digital teaching platform that accompanies the *New Advanced College English Integrated Course* published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, endeavoring to shift the teaching mode of college English towards digitization and informatization. The “WE Learn” digital teaching platform can effectively stimulate students’ interest in learning, enhance teacher-student interaction, and improve students’ understanding and application of college English knowledge. At the same time, it fully taps into students’ autonomous learning abilities and potential in English learning, establishing a digitized teaching mode that meets the learning needs of contemporary college students and providing new ideas for the reform of college English teaching. The features of “WE Learn” digital teaching platform can be illustrated in the following table (as seen in Table 1).

Table 1: Muti Functions of “WE Learn” Digital Teaching Platform

Category	Function
For Teaching	Preview of Vocabulary, Text, Background Information
	Classroom Teaching
	Related Information Exploration of the Teaching Topic
	Topic Discussion
	Question and Response
	Group Work for Further Teaching and Learning
	Assignment
	Announcement for Further Teaching and Learning
For Learning	Learning Settings
	Learning Analysis
	Learning Monitoring
For Evaluating	Test and feedback
	Search for Extended Material
	Voting
	Rewards
	Report Card

3. Research Basis

3.1 Rich Teaching and Research Experience of the Research Team

In recent years, the research team have been dedicated to the related fields such as blended learning, informatization, and digitized teaching. With substantial teaching and research experience, the team have presided seven provincial education reform projects, nine university-level education reform projects, with research topics covering English talent cultivation, college English curriculum reform, and college English teaching method innovation. The team have also presided sixteen provincial scientific research projects, published eleven related articles. Besides, the team have won the Second Prize in Jiangxi Province’s Foreign Language Teaching Ability Competition and the First Prize in the School’s Young Teachers’ Teaching Skills Competition twice.

3.2 Preliminary Foundation for Digitized Teaching

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all college English courses at the school were shifted online; therefore, the research team are quite familiar with online digital teaching platforms (such as Chaoxing, DingTalk Classroom, Rain Classroom, Tencent Meeting, WE Learn, and Ucampus), having accumulated much digitized teaching experience. Since 2018, the school has been using “WE Learn” as an online digitized teaching platform for college English teachers, gaining some application experience and laying an important foundation for the orderly implementation of this research.

3.3 Reasonable Structure of the Research Team

The research team consists of two associate professors and four lecturers, all of whom are middle-aged and young teachers in their prime. The courses taught by the steam include College English Reading and Writing, College English Listening and Speaking, English for Special Purposes, with an annual average teaching workload exceeding 400 hours for each member. The

research leader has been engaged in college English teaching for over 20 years, possessing rich teaching experience and having been rated as excellent in teaching effectiveness for multiple times. Teachers on the team have guided students to participate in various English competitions at different levels, winning three prizes at the state level, eleven prizes at the provincial level. They have also accumulated rich experience in digitized teaching and management, providing a strong guarantee for the completion of this research.

3.4 Digitized Teaching Foundation and Environment Provided by the School

The school of the research team has built a modern campus network and electronic library, with network coverage across the entire campus, which has laid a foundation for conducting digitized teaching for this research. Additionally, the school's language experiment center, language testing system, translation training room, and online learning system can all provide necessary support for the digitized teaching reform of this research.

4. Research Objective

From the perspective of educational informatization and digitization, and in combination with the application requirements of modern information technology in English teaching outlined in the 2020 edition of the *College English Teaching Guide*, this research proposes research on the construction and practice of a digitized teaching mode for college English based on “WE Learn”. It shifts away from the traditional teacher-centered teaching mode and instead starts from students' learning interests, selecting a digitized teaching mode that suits students' learning habits. This research realizes a student-centered teaching method, further enhancing the learning efficiency and teaching effectiveness of college English.

4.1 Shift from Traditional College English Teaching

4.1.1 Innovating the College English Teaching Mode

This research introduces a digitized teaching mode based on “WE Learn”, utilizing smartphones to assist students in achieving fragmented learning. To a certain extent, it innovates the college English teaching mode, enriches the content and methods of college English teaching and enhances its teaching effectiveness.

4.1.2 Innovating the College English Evaluation Method

This research conducts a more comprehensive and objective evaluation of students' English learning based on the “WE Learn” digital platform. By utilizing the backend data of “WE Learn”, it objectively assesses students' English abilities in various aspects such as vocabulary, texts, reading, listening, speaking, writing, translating, and extensions. This innovates and enriches the college English evaluation methods and provides new evaluation means for research on college English digitized teaching.

4.2 Establishment of Digitized College English Teaching

4.2.1 Innovating Teaching Methods

By shifting away from the traditional teacher-centered college English teaching mode, this research introduces a “WE Learn”-based digitized teaching approach. It enables students to engage

in the learning process through modern information technology, constructing a digitized teaching mode for college English from pre-class, in-class, and post-class dimensions. This enriches the teaching methods of college English.

4.2.2 Innovating Teaching Evaluation System

Instead of relying solely on students' classroom performance and final exams for evaluation, this research leverages modern educational technology and the backend data of the "WE Learn" digital platform to continuously monitor students' learning outcomes. It establishes an objective evaluation system for students' learning effectiveness, marking a shift towards a "WE Learn"-based digitized teaching evaluation system for college English.

4.2.3 Providing Insights for College English Digitized Teaching

The research findings on college English digitized teaching from this research will be published and available for download by relevant researchers. The findings will be promoted within the university and shared with other institutions through inter-university research and exchanges. These findings can serve as an important reference for other universities to implement college English digitized teaching.

5. Research Content

5.1 Pre-Class: Assigning Digital Learning Tasks

According to the requirements of college English teaching, the objectives are generally divided into three levels: knowledge, ability, and extension, with each level building upon the previous one. Before the English class, teachers should utilize the "WE Learn" digital platform to sequentially open up vocabulary learning, text learning, and extension learning for each unit in accordance with these three levels and in chronological order. Additionally, teachers should provide students with background knowledge related to the text content to stimulate their interest in independent exploration, enabling students to engage in corresponding preparatory learning, gain an advance understanding of the teaching content, identify and fill in knowledge gaps, and significantly improve their classroom participation and comprehension. Meanwhile, teachers can post online resources in the resource area of the "WE Learn" digital platform to assist students in their independent learning and to expand related knowledge before class. This allows students to effectively utilize mobile apps for fragmented learning. Teachers can also access backend data at any time to gain an early understanding of students' learning progress and tailor their classroom instruction accordingly.

5.2 In-Class: Digitized Teaching

The digitized teaching features of "WE Learn" enrich the teaching methods of college English and effectively stimulate learners' potential interests, encouraging students to take a more proactive approach to learning college English.

5.2.1 Theme Discussion

Due to limitations of transitional teaching, such as class size and limited classroom time, teachers may not be able to fully understand the learning situation of each student in the classroom. However, the theme discussion feature of the "WE Learn" digital platform broadens the dimensions

of time and space, allowing more students to participate in classroom activities through the digital platform. This feature not only exercises students' critical thinking skills but also enhances their English writing abilities. Teachers can also incorporate debate sessions based on the topics discussed, gaining insight into students' ideological dynamics while simultaneously improving their oral communication skills.

5.2.2 Voting

To motivate students' learning enthusiasm and participation, teachers can utilize the voting feature of the "WE Learn" digital platform to quickly organize students to vote or complete a questionnaire on a specific knowledge point. This helps teachers understand students' perspectives on a particular topic, enabling them to summarize and make targeted and reasonable adjustments to the teaching content and methods in a timely manner.

5.2.3 Student Selection and Quick Response

In traditional classroom teaching, it is often difficult for teachers to keep track of students' learning progress due to large class capacity. With the "WE Learn" digital platform, teachers can select one or more students based on teaching needs, increasing participation in classroom activities. Teachers can also use a quick response method, rewarding students based on the order of their responses on the "WE Learn" platform, which solves the problem of difficult response tracking in traditional classroom.

5.2.4 Testing

Teachers can use the testing feature of the "WE Learn" digital platform to assess students' vocabulary, translation, writing, and other skills as needed. By utilizing the platform's automatic grading function, teachers can provide students with real-time test results, significantly shortening the feedback loop and improving teaching efficiency and effectiveness.

5.3 Post-Class: Digitized Teaching Extension

After each digitized teaching session is completed, "WE Learn" tracks students' post-class learning progress based on system settings. Teachers can also conduct a second review of the tests submitted by students to promptly grasp the teaching effectiveness. To enhance students' initiative, they can be assigned to search for relevant materials and share them through the digital platform, improving their autonomous learning and independent problem-solving abilities. In addition to compiling assessment scores, the "WE Learn" digital platform also records participation, helping teachers understand students' learning situations and comprehensively evaluate their learning processes. This effectively extends and expands classroom teaching.

The whole teaching process of digitized English teaching based on "WE Learn" platform can be illustrated in the following figure (as seen in Figure 1).

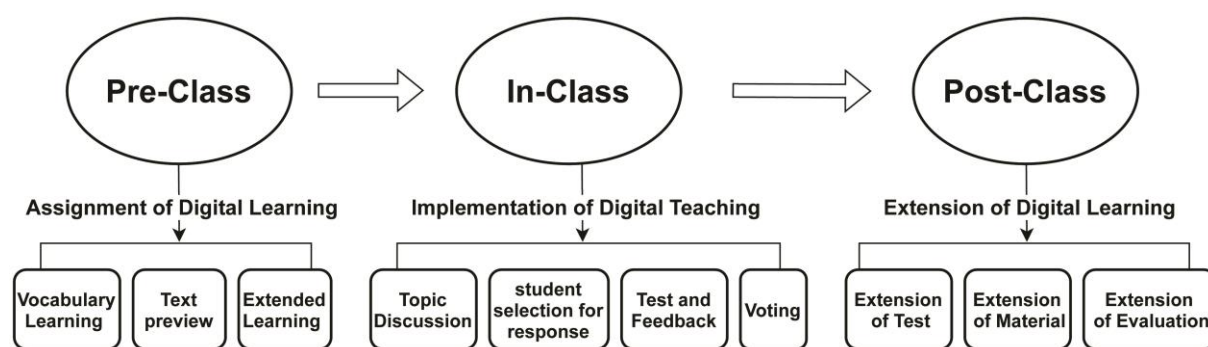


Figure 1: The Teaching Process of Digitized English Teaching Based on “WE Learn” Platform

6. Conclusion

With the advent of information age, information literacy is a demand for people especially college students and teachers. As the learners and educators of the society, they should be equipped with information literacy skills which enable them to exert efficient and effective activities such as selecting, utilizing, applying, managing, and exchanging information. “WE Learn” digital teaching platform, which comes into being as the digitization of English teaching, can provide multi purposes for English teachers to carry out digitized teaching beyond traditional English classes. With the learning and teaching methods provided by “WE Learn” digital teaching platform which are more suitable for modern students, their learning interests and motivation can be significantly enhanced; therefore, the students’ learning efficiency and effectiveness will be greatly improved.

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