A Comparative Study of Learning Achievement and Motivation for Chinese College English Learners in Traditional Classrooms and in Blended Learning Classrooms

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to compare college English learners' learning achievement and motivation under traditional and blended teaching methods. Two classes of computer science students from Shandong Yingcai University were selected as the sample for the experimental study. One class was the control group, and the other class was the experimental group. The teaching methods, traditional and blended, were implemented examined over sixteen weeks from September to December 2021. The experimental group received 4.5 hours of traditional face-to-face learning and unlimited online learning per week, while the control group received only 4.5 hours of traditional face-to-face learning per week. Research data were collected through the Learning Motivation Scale and the Test Paper of Learning Achievement. The results showed that students who took a college English course in a blended learning classroom had a higher success rate and higher motivation than a control group that took a college English course in a traditional classroom. Therefore, college English course can employ blended learning to promote students' academic achievement and motivation.

Introduction

The rapid development of science and technology in the 21st century has brought many new opportunities to the field of education. Technology has positively impacted both learning and teaching methods, and new learning models have emerged, the most popular of which is the blended teaching model (Akgündüz & Akinoglu, 2017). Unlike a single teaching model in the past, blended teaching has become the need of the times to leverage the educational content provided by the Internet and social media and mix multiple teaching models. A single traditional teaching model may not provide much opportunity to rebuild the knowledge, which leads to students gaining all the knowledge that is superficial and has a negative impact on English learning (Akinoglu, 2013). Numerous studies have demonstrated the advantages of blended learning over fully online learning and traditional teaching. Research by Wai & Seng (2015) argues that blended learning improves students' learning experience and learning outcomes. Gurel et.al (2015) argues that students learn more effectively in a blended environment. Hilliard (2015)

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shows that blended learning is growing at a rate of more than 46% per year worldwide, indicating that blended learning is gaining prominence

Yenice (2012) points out that one of the basic goals of education is to support the development of learners' cognitive and emotional areas. As one of the emotional factors, motivation is an important factor in students' learning and success. Many scholars who have studied the interrelationship between motivation and success, such as Keller (1983） and Maslow (1970) have developed their theories, arguing that different learning environments and patterns influence learning motivation. Dornyei (2009) constructs a three-level theoretical framework of foreign language motivation to define and measure foreign language learning motivation from language level, learner level, and learning situation level. Apeltauer (2010) argues that motivation is characterized as "the key to success" in the foreign language learning process of foreign language education. There is a cyclical relationship between motivation and the ability to learn. Positive emotions (motivation) affect cognitive processes in a positive way, cognitive processes transmit new information, and newly learned information strengthens positive emotions (motivation).

According to the researcher's survey of computer science students and the observation of college English classrooms in Shandong Yingcai University using the traditional approach, students followed the traditional approach of passive learning, tended to listen to teachers in the classroom mechanically, most students were not interested in learning college English and lacked motivation. Therefore, it is urgent to investigate students' motivation for English learning and adopt novel blended teaching methods to stimulate and maintain their learning motivation.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to compare college English learners' learning achievement and motivation under traditional and blended teaching methods.

Research Questions

1. Is there a significant difference before and after the implementation by means of learning achievement in the college English classes between the experimental group (blended teaching method) and the control group (traditional teaching method) available?

2. Is there a significant difference before and after the implementation by means of learning motivation towards the college English classes between the experimental group (blended teaching method) and the control group (traditional teaching method) available?

Research Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant difference before and after the implementation by means of learning achievement in the college English classes between the experimental group (blended teaching method) and the control group (traditional teaching method).

H2: There is a significant difference before and after the implementation by means of learning motivation towards the college English classes between the experimental group (blended teaching method) and the control group (traditional teaching method).

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Literature Review

Blended Teaching Methods

Collis and Moonen (2002) argued that the blended approach mixes traditional face-to-face learning with online learning, with teachers teaching both in the classroom and online, and online teaching is a natural extension of traditional classroom teaching. Margaret, et al. (2002) believed that blended learning is a way to mix multiple networked technologies, combine multiple teaching methods, combine any teaching technique with face-to-face teacher guidance, and mix teaching techniques and practical tasks.

In evaluating the effect of blended teaching, the researchers mainly focused on student achievement and satisfaction but used different methods to explore the observation points. Many studies examine students' satisfaction with blended teaching through questionnaires and interviews, and the results show that students have a positive attitude towards blended teaching (Ushida, 2005; Chenoweth, et al., 2006; Stracke, 2007).

Means, et al. (2013) meta-analyzed 45 experimental or quasi-experimental studies published between 1996 and 2008 on online learning or blended learning in higher education and found that the effectiveness of single online learning was no different from that of a single face-to-face model and that blended teaching was superior to a single face-to-face model. Baepler, et al. (2014) and Vo, et al. (2017) had concluded that blended teaching in higher education produces better results. Grgurovic (2010) analyzed seven studies on blended teaching in foreign language teaching in colleges and universities, all of which examined the effectiveness of blended teaching by comparing it with traditional teaching. Bukhari & Basaffar (2019) found that incorporating blended learning into an intensive English program is flexible, convenient, and provides an interactive educational environment. Blended learning increases student motivation boosts their confidence to practice English online, and helps them become independent learners, enhancing teacher-student interaction. Zhang and Zhu (2018) conducted a study comparing blended learning models to traditional face-to-face learning models. The results showed that students who studied the blended learning model performed better in the ESL program compared to other students who used the face-to-face mode

The additional analysis showed that technical problems and unfamiliarity with the online learning environment affected the effectiveness of blended teaching. The more important conclusion of the research on the effect of blended teaching is that the key to effective blended teaching lies in how to blend classroom face-to-face teaching and online learning. As Ross and Gage (2006) suggested, future research should focus more on how to blend.

Traditional Teaching Methods

In the traditional teaching model of college English courses, teachers have always been the center of teaching activities, and they are also the main body of teaching activities, playing the role of communicators. Students are the recipients of knowledge, teaching multi-functional media is the carrier of teaching activities, and student achievements are an important basis for judging students' learning (Sui, 2013). It is difficult to arouse students' interest in learning in traditional classrooms; they can only passively learn, and the lack of active application of language functions and reasonable practice makes learners unable to understand and use the language outside the classroom despite the many years of learning the language (He, 2013). One

of the biggest disadvantages of the traditional English teaching model is that it suppresses students' initiative. Teachers become the real leader of the classroom, students' subjectivity status is seriously neglected, teachers become Master of Teaching activities, students learn passively, which directly affects students' consciousness and lack of enthusiasm in English learning, which not only seriously affects students' learning efficiency in the long run. It is not conducive to developing students' good thinking ability, especially divergent thinking ability and innovation ability, and is not conducive to students' overall development (Gai & Liu, 2016)

Learning Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) believed that motivation for learning a foreign language refers to a positive attitude that learners strive to present to achieve the goal of learning a foreign language well. Ellis (1994) believed that foreign language learning is motivated by a desire and a strong desire to learn a foreign language and that learners make efforts to meet and fulfill their needs. Wen (1996) believed that English learning motivation is the purpose and reason for learners to learn English.

Ima, et al. (2018) had carried out qualitative research from the perspective of students' English learning motivation, and they have studied how to improve students' English learning motivation in the process of learning English with blended learning and put forward some suggestions on the application of teaching plan, teaching design and material development, teaching implementation and teaching re-entry. Using a blended activity-based teaching strategy, Abdelrahman, et al. (2015) conducted a variety of online activities in teaching, such as communicative skills training, critical thinking discussions, oral reporting, video production, and mind map creation, and provided timely guidance and evaluation feedback to students in secondary school. Experimental data showed that the activity-based blended teaching strategy could effectively improve students' achievement and learning motivation..

Learning Achievement

Djamarah (1994) believed that achievement is what has been created, the result of work, the result of the pleasure gained through perseverance at work. Learning achievement is an educational assessment of a student's progress and progress in mastering the course materials provided to the student. Winkel & Mathiassen (1994) argues that academic performance is proof of a student's success or ability to perform learning activities according to the weight achieved. Supriyono (1990) argues that academic achievement is the result of the interaction of various factors that influence internal and external factors. Learning outcomes are what learners learn over a period of time or after a unit of learning and are a measure of student learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are measured by a variety of indicators, including learning self-assessment and learning achievement (Sun, 2014).

College English in China

College English is a compulsory basic course for Chinese university students, which is important to cultivate English talents. It aims to cultivate students' comprehensive English application ability and enable students to communicate effectively in English. At the same time, they improve their comprehensive cultural literacy to meet the needs of China's social

development and foreign exchange needs. College English is one of the largest, most invested, and most valued university courses in China, and the teaching of College English has been the general concern of the society (Wang, 2002). Foreign language experts, scholars, and teachers have actively researched college English teaching and published many research results (Jiang & Yu, 2011), positively promoting college English teaching in China. As a result, the teaching ability of teachers is constantly improved, and the teaching mode is increasingly updated (Cai, 2012). Cai also pointed out that China has a vast territory, unbalanced economic development and basic education, and uneven distribution of teaching resources, leading to great regional differences in foreign language proficiency of students and teachers. Therefore, it is urgent to implement differentiated college English teaching reform.

Unipus

Unipus (Foreign Language Teaching Platform for Universities) conforms to the development trend of intelligent, interactive, autonomous and mobile education technology, integrating curriculum, teaching, assessment and research, allowing users to experience a new online interactive language learning and teaching environment. Unipus provides technical support and guarantee for the implementation of blended teaching and research based on big data in English courses (Zhu, 2018). Teaching based on Unipus teaching platform not only includes online learning, testing, and interaction to help students complete self-learning and the cultivation of English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation skills, but also ensures that students gain a large amount of knowledge outside the classroom. In addition, teachers can divide the difficulty of learning materials according to students' learning situation, so that students can adapt to the difficulty of teaching materials and better absorb knowledge. Students can gain more cultural knowledge through the platform, broaden the channels of knowledge reserve, and improve their comprehensive quality (Chen, 2022). Teachers can not only view the overall status distribution of big data in the class, but also query the data for individual students, so as to better understand the learning status of students and adjust the teaching plan in time. Students can also use the platform to give feedback on problems and strengthen communication with teachers. In this process, teachers guide students to learn independently and strengthen self-supervision ability, so as to improve students' learning efficiency (Han, 2020).

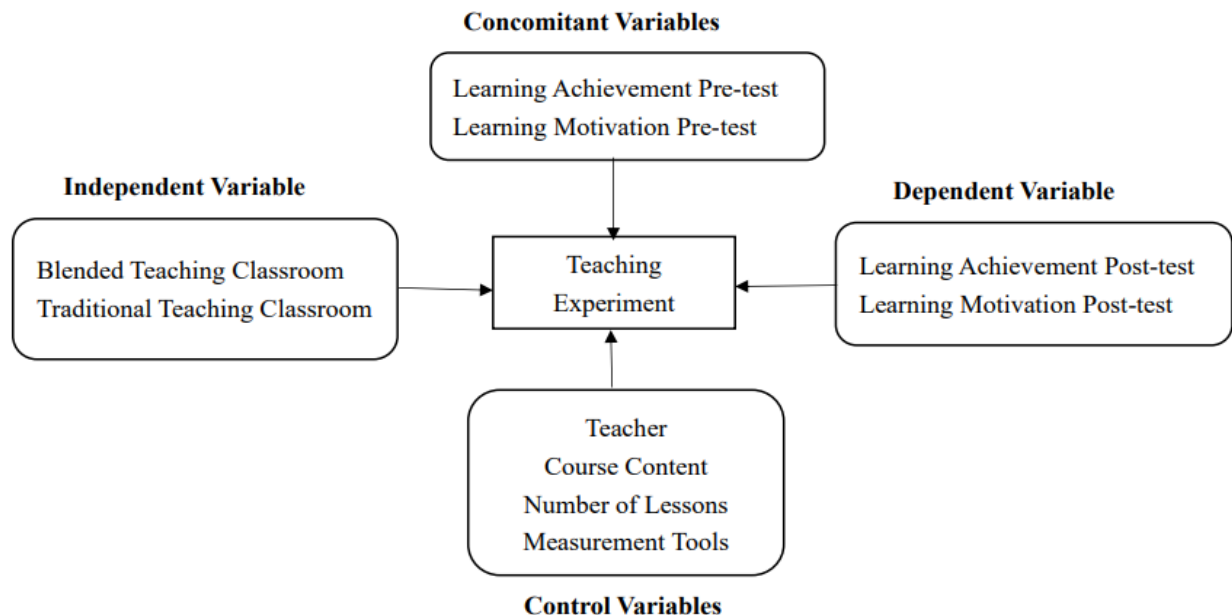**Shandong Yingcai University**

Shandong Yingcai University is a private undergraduate college approved by the Ministry of Education in China. Private undergraduate students have weak learning ability, poor learning foundation, lack learning strategies, and have low learning autonomy and enthusiasm, particularly prominent in college English learning. According to the survey of the current situation of College English learning at Shandong Yingcai University, the results revealed that computer science students believed that they would not go abroad after graduation and would not engage in English-related work. Instead, they perceive that English language learning is for passing the examination purposes only; therefore, their English learning motivation is not strong. Therefore, how to stimulate and maintain students' motivation in English learning and highlighting the benefits of English learning has become an urgent task facing English teachers. Compared with the traditional teaching mode, the blended teaching mode is novel, vivid, realistic, and diversified, enhancing the interest in learning and allowing students to have enough thinking practice and space to stimulate and strengthen English learning behavior.

Conceptual Framework

The main purpose of this study was to compare college English learners' learning achievement and motivation under traditional and blended teaching methods. The blended teaching classroom and the traditional teaching classroom are the independent variables of this study, the concomitant variables are the pre-test data (including the pre-test of learning achievement and learning motivation), and the dependent variable is the corresponding post-test data, and the control variables include teachers, course content, number of lessens, measurement tools, etc. The Conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

Source: Designed by researchers

Research Methodology

Participants

The experimental samplings of this study are first-year computer science students of Shandong Yingcai University. There were 32 people in the experimental group and 35 people in the control group. Ethical approval was obtained from the Dean of School of Humanities before conducting the research. The written informed consent of each participant was also sought. The experiment lasted 16 weeks of one semester and had 3 lessons per week, for a total of 48 lesson.

An independent sample t-test was performed on the final grades (Total score: 100) of college English for the two classes using SPSS.26 (see Table 1), and the test results (see Table 1) showed no significant difference in the mean score and standard deviation of the two classes (P=0.711>0.05). An independent sample t-test was performed on SPSS.26 for learning motivation of the two classes, and the test results (see Table 2) showed no significant difference between the mean scores and standard deviations of the two classes (P=0.946>0.05). Overall, both classes had the same English scores and motivation before entering blended learning. In order to exclude the interference of irrelevant variables, the experimental group and the control group were taught by the researcher, the experimental group adopted a blended teaching method, and the control group adopted a traditional teaching method.

Table 1

The independent sample t-test results of pre-test learning achievement

The Test	Class	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2- tailed)
Learning Achievement	experimental	32	73.47	8.481	0.372	0.711
	control	35	72.77	6.847		

Table 2

The independent sample t-test results of pre-test learning motivation

The Test	Class	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Learning Motivation	experimental	32	3.83	.626	0.068	0.946
	control	35	3.49	.804		

Instrument

Learning Motivation Scale

Based on Dornyei's (1994) second language motivation theory and Wu's (2018) motivation questionnaire, the researcher developed a questionnaire on college English learners' motivation. It consisted of 35 questions rated using five Likert scales. The study scale was validated by five experts in the field of education. At the beginning of the semester, a pilot experiment of motivation questionnaires was carried out, 46 electronic questionnaires were distributed through the Questionnaire Star website, 46 were recovered, and 46 valid test papers were collected, and the overall reliability was $\alpha=0.934$. The reliability coefficients are greater than 0.8, indicating that the reliability of the test paper is very good and there is internal consistency between the questions.

In this study, factor analysis was used to analyze the validity of the scale, and after the KMO sampling moderation measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, the overall validity of the questionnaire was 0.938 and the KMO value was 0.938> 0.7, this indicates that the learning

motivation scale has high validity. By testing the reliability and validity of the scale, it was known that the questionnaire used in this study could achieve the intended study purpose.

The Test Paper of Learning Achievement

The Test Paper of Learning Achievement is compiled by the proposition team. The test paper (full score 100 marks) is composed of six parts: listening, fill-in-the-blank, translation, reading comprehension, writing, and speaking. The questions in the test paper are selected from the College English Test Band 4, and the difficulty of the test papers is basically the same.

In this research, the students' English final exam scores in the previous semester were used as the pre-test data of the learning achievement of the students in the experimental group and the control group, so as to compare and analyze the learning achievement post-test data of the students in the two groups after the experiment, and analyze whether there was a significant difference in the learning achievement of the students before and after the two teaching methods. Due to the continuity of language courses, it is more objective and reliable to use the final grades of the previous semester as the pre-test data of learning achievement in this research.

Data Collection Process

The research lasted 16 weeks and 48 lessons. Participants in all groups took the Motivation Scale pre-test in the first week and the Motivation Scale and the Learning Achievement Post-Test in the last week.

Control group (traditional teaching method): The teaching activities of the control group were based on constructivist learning methods for face-to-face learning, and the curriculum design was implemented according to the teaching steps recommended in the teacher's book. The 3 lessons per week were divided into introduction, inquiry, explanation and evaluation stages, and the classroom used question-and-answer methods, discussion methods, group cooperation methods, problem solving methods. The teacher used textbooks and workbooks as course materials and selected appropriate unit activities from textbooks and student workbooks. At the end of each lesson, students were assigned exercises in the textbook and workbook, and the homework was checked and evaluated before the next class.

Experimental group (blended teaching method): The teaching activities of the experimental group were based on the teaching content of the unit, 3 lessons of face-to-face learning per week, and online learning using the Internet after class. Face-to-face learning was taught in the same way as the control group, with some face-to-face activities being carried out in parallel with online activities, which were completed by students independently or in small groups. In addition to textbooks, student workbooks and other resources, the Unipus (University Foreign Language Teaching Platform) website was also used. The Unipus platform website organically combine online and offline teaching, covering the pre-class, class and after-class links. The Unipus website showcases unit activities, student workbooks, animations, videos, interactive activities and online assessments in the textbook to meet the needs of students in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. Students can choose the corresponding English learning direction according to their personal interests and complete the expansion of English knowledge outside the classroom. In this group, students can log in to register for a virtual classroom on the website before learning begins. The teacher selected interactive animations and

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videos from the website and assigned after-class tasks to prepare for the next class. At the same time, students were assigned assignments and tasks to evaluate previous learning results, record problems that have been solved, and then feedback to students. The teacher followed up on students' work completion daily, recorded the percentage of students completing work, and analyzed the results. The Unipus system automatically counted student scores, collected students' answers, and analyzed which knowledge points have not been mastered by students, then the teacher will briefly repeat before the next class, and arranged relevant after-class exercises again to consolidate and strengthen the learning effect.

The research tools used in this experiment are the Learning Motivation Scale and the Test Paper of Learning Achievement. The analysis of quantitative data was done by SPSS 26.0, which calculated the mean and standard deviation of the pre- and post-test scores of the control and experimental groups.

Results and Discussion

Findings

For Research Hypothesis One

The results of the independent sample t-test of post-test learning achievement (Total score: 100) of the experimental group and the control group are shown in Table 3. The results showed that the average scores of the experimental group and the control group were 81.53 and 72.03, respectively, and after 16 weeks of blended teaching, the average score of the experimental group in the post-test was 9.5 points higher than that of the control group, and the results of the independent sample t test showed a significant difference (P=0.000 <0.05). As a result, blended teaching method produce better learning achievement than traditional teaching method.

Table 3

The independent sample t-test results of post-test learning achievement

The Test	Class	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Learning Achievement	experimental	32	81.53	9.575	4.728	0.000
	control	35	72.03	6.745		

The findings of this research validate hypothesis one "There is a significant difference before and after the implementation by means of learning achievement in the college English classes between the experimental group (blended teaching method) and the control group (traditional teaching method)".

For Research Hypothesis Two

The results of the t-test of independent samples of post-test learning motivation in the experimental group and the control group are shown in Table 4. The results showed that the average scores of the experimental group and the control group were 136.43 and 122.17,

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respectively, and after 16 weeks of blended teaching, the average score of the experimental group in the post-test was 14.26 points higher than that of the control group, and the results of the independent sample t test showed that the motivation of the two groups showed a significant difference (P=0.000 <0.05). It can be seen that the blended teaching method generates higher learning motivation than the traditional teaching method.

Table 4

The independent sample t-test results of post-test learning motivation

The Test	Class	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2 - tailed)
Learning Motivation	experimental	32	4.26	.553	3.048	0.003
	control	35	3.49	.710		

The findings of this research validate hypothesis Two "There is a significant difference before and after the implementation by means of learning motivation towards the college English classes between the experimental group (blended teaching method) and the control group (traditional teaching method)".

Discussion

The results suggest that blended teaching method improves the learning achievement of English learners more than traditional teaching method and is more effective in improving the success rate of college English classrooms. According to the findings of Akkoyulu & Soylu (2006), parallel to this study, it was found that students achieve high academic achievement in blended learning environments. Garrison & Kanuka (2004) similarly asserted in their study that they studied blended learning environments and ultimately improved student success. Blended learning methods are already taking place in online courses at many educational institutions, and classroom instruction has also been conducted with successful results. Educational institutions that prefer any type of blended learning are increasing (Young, 2002). Creswell, et al. (2011) believes that in the process of blended teaching, in addition to using videos and video materials in face-to-face learning classrooms, teachers can also make full use of integrated learning portals, website information, video resources, and after-school interactive activities as homework, and require examinations and homework to be completed within the specified time, paying close attention to students' performance. The combination of the two will enable students to achieve higher and more important academic achievements.

The findings showed that students using blended teaching had a higher level of motivation and that students were happy to learn in a blended learning environment. This was consistent with the findings of Akguindüiz & Aklnoglu (2017). Existing studies also generally agreed that students' motivation levels had increased in blended teaching environments (Abdelrahman, et al.,

2015; Ima, et al., 2018). Experimental data showed that the activity-based blended teaching method could effectively improve students' achievement and learning motivation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Judging from the research results, the blended teaching method was generally successful, and this new model fully mobilized students' enthusiasm to learn, enhanced their motivation to learn, and improved their learning achievement. The blended teaching method enriches face-to-face and online activities, providing students with a wide range of opportunities for discussion, exploration, and collaboration. To provide opportunities for these presentations, blended teaching method and their activities must be designed from the perspective of blended learning complements and constraints, and teachers and learners must fulfill their tasks and responsibilities (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007). Teachers were required to invest more energy in task design and timely feedback in teaching practice, conduct online real-time guidance for the part of online learning, pay close attention to students' learning, answer doubts promptly, and effectively managed (Yang, 2019).

The research may provide insights to encourage college English teachers to take advantage of emerging technologies by using blended teaching method to improve the quality of teaching and improve student academic achievement. In addition, it can raise teachers' awareness of the benefits of blended learning and its impact on student academic achievement and motivation. This research may help to improve students' knowledge of ICT acceptance and their progress in a blended learning model.

Recommendations

Despite the many benefits, the use of blended learning can present some challenges. However, there is a lack of literature to examine the problems teachers face when using blended learning methods in ESL/EFL environments. More research must be done to explore ESL/EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges they face in using blended learning in English language instruction. The recommendations of this study will be directed to the following groups:

University administrators should attach importance to the development of the blended teaching model, strengthen the training of teachers' informatization skills, develop a diversified online learning platform, and prepare for the development of the blended teaching method.

English teachers in universities should make full use of network information resources while improving their professional teaching quality; they should also continue to learn network knowledge and skills, enhance the proficiency of teaching equipment, and carry out more modules and learning units that are conducive to students' learning based on familiarity. Teachers should fully realize the importance of network information communication, promptly grasp students' daily learning, and classify students, thereby helping students achieve greater academic achievement.

College students should improve the utilization rate of network resources, communicate more online, and communicate more offline. In addition, college students should improve their awareness of offline-online learning, pay attention to the study of theoretical knowledge, and pay attention to daily oral practice communication. Finally, in learning and practice, students should find a learning strategy suitable for themselves and improve their academic achievement.

In future studies, researchers should increase the sample size and the dimensions that affect students' English proficiency and further explore how blended teaching can more effectively improve college students' English achievement and learning motivation. In addition, future researchers can further explore different types of blended learning platforms and their effect on English language skills.

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