

Article

A Study on College English Teaching Reform Under the Flipped Classroom Model

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Abstract: In the flipped classroom teaching model, college students acquire knowledge-based content in English courses by watching micro-lecture videos and studying related materials before class. During class, they participate in more interactive activities, including group cooperative learning and critical thinking exercises. After class, they consolidate their understanding by summarizing the knowledge and insights gained both before and during class, and engage in extended learning activities. In the era of artificial intelligence, College English teaching faces numerous challenges in practical implementation. The introduction of the flipped classroom model provides a novel approach for both teaching research and practical exploration in this field. Implementing this model in College English courses aligns well with the characteristics of college students, effectively enhancing their motivation for autonomous learning, improving their independent learning abilities, and increasing overall classroom effectiveness, thereby offering new perspectives for the reform of College English teaching.

Keywords: flipped classroom; College English; teaching model; teaching reform; teaching practice

1. Introduction

College English in higher education institutions is a traditional and compulsory course in general colleges and universities in China, highlighting its significance within the curriculum system and talent development framework. Over the years, this course has faced numerous difficulties and challenges in practical teaching. In the context of comprehensive education and teaching reform, the traditional English teaching model can no longer meet the demands of modern educational development. To promote the further advancement of contemporary teaching systems, it is necessary to reform single-mode instruction with diversified objectives, integrate advanced technologies in an organic manner, and ensure that teaching models evolve in line with contemporary trends. With the rapid development of information technology, the flipped teaching model, as a student-centered approach, has become increasingly important for enhancing students' learning outcomes. In the information age, these challenges have become particularly urgent, requiring careful attention and systematic responses.

The core objectives of College English teaching are to cultivate students' English application abilities and cross-cultural communication skills to support scientific research and career development [1]. Specific objectives include: academic language proficiency, enabling students to read professional foreign-language literature, write academic papers (including abstracts and introductions), and prepare and deliver academic reports and defenses; cross-cultural literacy, allowing students to communicate effectively in international academic and professional contexts, understand cultural differences, and respond flexibly; and autonomous learning and application capabilities, empowering students to master efficient language-learning strategies and independently expand their

Published: 29 November 2025



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language skills, such as technical translation and professional communication, according to specific academic or career requirements. The course is characterized by academic orientation, a high proportion of autonomous learning, and an emphasis on cross-cultural communication and professional integration. It prioritizes academic scenarios, including core training in academic reading, writing, and oral presentation, rather than basic grammar and vocabulary. Personalization and autonomy are strongly emphasized through multiple elective modules, such as English for Science and Technology and translation practice, often employing project-based learning, which requires advanced skills in independent planning and information retrieval [2].

Furthermore, the course content is closely linked to professional needs. For example, technical document translation is emphasized for engineering majors, while academic critical thinking and expression are emphasized for liberal arts majors, serving both scientific research and future career development. Accordingly, teaching methods are distinctly project-based and research-oriented, using academic scenarios as the primary framework, focusing on task-driven learning, independent inquiry, and interactive practice, and meeting the demands of research and professional development. Commonly employed methods include task-driven approaches that design closed-loop learning around academic tasks, such as intensive literature reading, abstract writing, and academic conference simulations; project-based learning (PBL) that engages students in thematic group projects to develop collaboration and problem-solving skills, such as cross-cultural academic cooperation plans or translation of foreign-language professional reports; flipped classroom combined with blended teaching, where students complete online independent learning (e.g., vocabulary and theoretical content) before class and focus on discussion, feedback, and practical exercises during class, such as defense simulations and peer review; and personalized hierarchical teaching, dividing modules by language proficiency and professional needs to allow independent course selection and targeted tutoring. Therefore, teaching evaluation in College English should combine process-oriented and summative assessments, emphasizing academic English application ability and autonomous learning effectiveness, rather than relying solely on examination-oriented evaluation [3].

The flipped classroom adopts a teaching structure of "learning first, then teaching," reflecting contemporary educational concepts and offering a new perspective for current College English teaching. Known for its innovative approach, the flipped classroom reverses the traditional sequence of "teacher first, students later," redistributes learning time between in-class and out-of-class activities, and provides a new avenue for teaching reform research and practice in English courses. In the era of artificial intelligence, while course content and teaching hours remain constant, applying the flipped classroom model to College English teaching can effectively enhance students' motivation for autonomous learning, improve independent learning skills and classroom outcomes, meet the specific requirements of teaching objectives, methods, and evaluation, and offer meaningful insights for the reform of public courses in higher education [4].

2. Introduction to the Flipped Classroom Teaching Model

2.1. Origin and Concept of the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom originated in the United States. The concept of the "classroom flip model" was first proposed in 2000 and subsequently promoted by educators worldwide. The flipped classroom involves reversing the traditional sequence of knowledge transmission and internalization: students independently acquire knowledge using information technology after class, while knowledge internalization occurs in class under teacher guidance and peer collaboration. Thus, the flipped classroom has become a highly regarded teaching model. Also known as the inverted classroom, this model changes the order of knowledge transmission and internalization with the support of information technology [5].

The prototype of the flipped classroom emerged from a high school in Colorado, USA. In 2007, two teachers recorded short, easily understandable instructional videos and shared them online with students who were absent from class. The videos were well-received by students and parents, inspiring the teachers to experiment with a flipped classroom approach: students studied micro-lecture videos and other materials at home before formal classes, then returned to school for teacher guidance, group discussions, class sharing activities, and homework completion. In this way, traditional teaching and learning were inverted. Driven by information technology, this model gradually took shape and has since become one of the primary paradigms in academic research on teaching reform [6].

In practice, students engage in independent learning and inquiry by watching carefully produced micro-lecture videos and completing related exercises before class. During class, teachers do not focus on teaching basic content but facilitate activities such as answering questions, organizing discussions, and guiding sharing sessions. This provides intellectual support and practical opportunities for students to internalize knowledge and develop critical thinking abilities. Consequently, the classroom becomes a space for mutual learning and in-depth discussion among teachers and students, as well as among students themselves, enhancing students' learning interest, participation, and initiative. After class, teachers assign extended learning tasks to consolidate knowledge and strengthen relevant skills. As a product of the information age, the flipped classroom has transformed traditional educational concepts and methods, offering a new model and pathway for teaching reform and practical exploration in the AI era.

2.2. Theoretical Basis of the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom represents a transformative reform of traditional teaching, reversing conventional teaching processes, concepts, models, and the roles of teachers and students, while implementing the principles of constructivism. Its theoretical foundation is rooted in constructivist theory and autonomous learning theory.

Constructivist theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed by learners within a specific socio-cultural context with the assistance of others and necessary learning materials, rather than passively received through transmission. Knowledge acquisition is student-centered, resulting from independent discovery and inquiry. Learning involves two stages: the transmission of knowledge and its internalization or meaning construction. Traditional classrooms often prioritize the first stage, focusing on teacher-led knowledge delivery while neglecting the second stage. Constructivist theory asserts that knowledge internalization is more important and meaningful. Traditional classrooms frequently leave internalization to after-class assignments, which can hinder effective learning. The flipped classroom fully embraces constructivist principles: students acquire foundational knowledge before class via micro-lecture videos and course materials, and then engage in homework, group learning, and in-class question-and-answer activities under teacher guidance. This approach shifts knowledge internalization into the classroom and redefines the teacher's role from a knowledge transmitter to a guide and facilitator of independent learning and active inquiry, helping students internalize knowledge and develop critical thinking skills.

Autonomous learning is a student-centered approach in which learners take responsibility for all decisions regarding their learning, either individually or in groups, without direct teacher guidance. Although complete autonomous learning is ideal, its effectiveness is influenced by factors such as learners' self-learning abilities, personality, learning goals, background, and access to technology. With the rapid development of information technology, the flipped classroom enhances traditional teaching by highlighting students' initiative and autonomy, positioning teachers as guides in independent learning, and reducing the randomness and inefficiency associated with unguided autonomous learning. This model facilitates knowledge transfer, meaning

construction, and the improvement of students' comprehensive abilities. By combining the advantages of autonomous learning theory with innovative classroom practices, the flipped classroom has redefined traditional teaching and led the way in current curriculum reform and pedagogical exploration.

3. Teaching Strategies of Collage English for in Higher Education Institutions Under the Flipped Classroom Model

The flipped classroom teaching model has provided a new direction for College English teaching reform and practical exploration in the context of rapid information technology development. Implementing flipped classroom strategies in English courses has offered valuable insights into teaching concepts and methods, which can be summarized into three stages:

Pre-class Learning Stage: In this stage, teachers prepare 2-3 micro-lecture videos of 10-15 minutes each according to specific teaching content, objectives, and key points. They also create relevant PPT courseware and design exercises, including thinking or discussion questions that encourage critical thinking and present certain challenges. Students are required to complete pre-class learning tasks thoroughly to prepare for in-depth classroom learning. They carefully watch the micro-lecture videos and study supplementary materials while taking detailed notes. They complete assigned exercises, with particular attention to critical thinking and discussion questions, documenting their insights and understanding. Group members collaborate to prepare a PPT for classroom presentations on relevant issues. Additionally, students carefully read textbook texts, resolving language difficulties while perceiving the emotional expression, aesthetic implications, and deeper spiritual meaning of the materials, thereby enhancing their comprehension and aesthetic appreciation. This teaching design transforms students from passive recipients in traditional classrooms into active explorers and discoverers in flipped learning, allowing them to experience both the challenges and satisfaction of independent inquiry and paving the way for aesthetic perception and critical thinking in subsequent classroom learning.

In-class Internalization Stage: During this stage, teachers act primarily as facilitators and guides. Key activities include checking students' exercises to assess their independent learning, summarizing and reviewing course content while emphasizing key and challenging points, and organizing students to present group PPT reports on complex thinking or discussion questions. Students engage in discussion and analysis of these topics. Teachers provide feedback, highlight areas for attention, and guide students toward exploring the deeper meanings and ideological essence of the texts. This stage ensures that knowledge is internalized through active engagement, collaboration, and critical reflection.

Post-class Promotion Stage: The post-class promotion stage is an essential component of the flipped classroom, particularly in College English teaching, which integrates rich humanistic, aesthetic, and ideological elements. Activities at this stage include summarizing group discussions and submitting written group reports based on in-class learning. Completing these extended learning tasks develops students' summarization, analytical, evaluative, creative writing, and research abilities. By engaging in these activities, students enhance their critical thinking skills, fulfilling the educational objectives of the flipped classroom teaching model and reinforcing the comprehensive development of English proficiency.

4. Reflections on Collage English Teaching Under the Flipped Classroom Model

By reversing traditional teaching ideas and procedures, the flipped classroom emphasizes students' initiative and autonomy in learning, enhances their self-directed learning abilities, and effectively improves course teaching outcomes. However, implementing the flipped classroom is not straightforward. Although this teaching model

offers notable advantages, its effectiveness is influenced by multiple factors. The main challenges in College English teaching under the flipped classroom model can be summarized as follows:

4.1. Teachers' Teaching Concepts and Professional Literacy

In flipped classroom teaching, teachers must recognize the shift in their roles from traditional knowledge transmitters to guides and facilitators of students' learning. This requires careful preparation of learning materials before class, timely distribution of resources, reminders for students to complete pre-class tasks, monitoring pre-class learning progress during class, organizing group discussions, guiding higher-order thinking exercises, and supervising post-class extended assignments. For teachers accustomed to traditional paradigms, this represents a significant challenge. Updating teaching concepts and improving professional literacy are essential. Producing high-quality micro-lecture videos and designing appropriate exercises are time-consuming and test teachers' expertise. Inadequate preparation or poor quality of these tasks can diminish students' enthusiasm and motivation for autonomous learning. Furthermore, the design, organization, and guidance of in-class activities are crucial, requiring strong classroom management, observational skills, and professional knowledge. Poorly planned or unscientific arrangements hinder effective classroom engagement, reduce students' participation and interest in discussions, and negatively impact teaching effectiveness. Teachers are central to the successful implementation of the flipped classroom; therefore, strengthening teaching capabilities and professional literacy is vital.

4.2. College Students' Autonomous Learning Ability

Effective flipped classroom teaching relies on active student participation and cooperation throughout the three stages of pre-class preparation, in-class engagement, and post-class follow-up. Some students, however, struggle with autonomous learning, are accustomed to passive learning, and lack the motivation to engage proactively. This can result in incomplete pre-class tasks, which adversely affects in-class learning and the overall achievement of teaching goals. Students themselves are the primary determinant of learning effectiveness. To achieve teaching objectives under the flipped classroom model, students must adopt proactive learning attitudes, enhance learning strategies, improve self-management, strengthen intrinsic motivation, and fully exercise their learning agency. Teachers, in turn, need to highlight the importance of autonomous learning, instruct students in effective learning methods, guide independent inquiry, and support the development of students' autonomous learning capabilities.

4.3. Adjustment of Course Assessment Standards and Content

In the flipped classroom, students transition from passive recipients of knowledge to active participants, fully engaging in all aspects of the learning process. Traditional assessment methods are inadequate for evaluating this level of engagement and autonomy, and thus require adjustments. Assessment can include formative evaluation, summative evaluation, and personalized additional assessments. Formative assessment (40%-60%) encompasses classroom participation (e.g., seminars and presentations), regular assignments (literature abstracts, translation exercises, preliminary drafts of academic papers), project outcomes (group reports, simulated conference presentations), and autonomous learning records (reading logs, vocabulary accumulation). Summative assessment (40%-60%) focuses on academic proficiency, including academic English reading and writing tests (literature interpretation and paper excerpts), oral defenses or academic presentations, and professional translation assessments (e.g., technical documents or research abstract translation). Personalized additional assessments may involve the use of academic English tools (such as reference management software and literature retrieval) and cross-cultural communication case analyses aligned with

professional applications. Increasing the proportion and scope of formative assessment stimulates students' motivation and daily engagement, supporting the achievement of teaching objectives. Under the flipped classroom model, course assessment emphasizes learning processes and student engagement rather than relying solely on final exam results, thereby enhancing learning quality and fostering students' enthusiasm for active participation.

5. Discussion

The implementation of the flipped classroom in College English teaching provides valuable insights into modern pedagogical reform in higher education. The teaching practice demonstrates that this model effectively enhances students' autonomous learning, stimulates classroom engagement, and fosters critical thinking skills. By transferring knowledge acquisition to pre-class independent learning and emphasizing in-class interaction for analysis, discussion, and application, the flipped classroom addresses many of the limitations inherent in traditional lecture-based teaching. Students are no longer passive recipients of information; instead, they actively construct knowledge, collaborate with peers, and apply their understanding to complex, real-world tasks. This not only deepens their comprehension of academic content but also strengthens their ability to engage in scholarly inquiry and cross-cultural communication.

Despite these advantages, several challenges remain in implementing the flipped classroom effectively. Teachers face significant demands in updating teaching concepts, preparing high-quality micro-lecture videos, designing meaningful exercises, and organizing interactive classroom activities. Any shortcomings in these areas can directly impact students' motivation, participation, and learning outcomes. Similarly, students' varying levels of autonomous learning ability present obstacles to achieving the desired teaching objectives. Some students, accustomed to passive learning, may struggle to engage fully in pre-class preparation and in-class activities, which can hinder the overall learning process. Moreover, assessment practices must be carefully aligned with the flipped classroom approach, emphasizing formative evaluation, project-based outcomes, and active participation rather than relying solely on traditional summative assessments.

The experiences and reflections from applying the flipped classroom model have important implications for broader teaching reform in higher education. First, this model encourages a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy, promoting active knowledge construction and collaborative learning. Second, it highlights the integration of information technology into teaching, demonstrating how digital tools can support independent learning, enhance classroom interactivity, and provide opportunities for personalized instruction. Third, the flipped classroom provides a framework for cultivating higher-order skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and academic research abilities, which are essential for students' professional and scholarly development.

Looking forward, there are opportunities to further optimize College English teaching under the flipped classroom model. Incorporating AI-assisted learning tools, adaptive learning platforms, and online collaborative resources can enhance pre-class preparation and post-class consolidation, allowing students to engage more effectively with content and peers. Continuous professional development for teachers, including training in instructional design, digital content creation, and classroom facilitation, will strengthen the quality and effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction. Additionally, ongoing refinement of assessment strategies, integrating both formative and summative approaches with attention to personalized learning outcomes, can better capture students' progress and learning achievements.

6. Conclusion

College English in higher education institutions is a critical component of talent development programs. Compared with general undergraduate training, it places higher demands on students' autonomous learning, academic skills, and critical thinking abilities. Improving the effectiveness and quality of this course has long been a significant challenge for College English instructors. The advent of the flipped classroom has provided a new pathway for teaching exploration and practical implementation.

Practice has demonstrated that applying the flipped classroom to College English teaching allows students to independently acquire, digest, and absorb a large volume of background knowledge during the pre-class stage. Content that requires analysis, evaluation, and comprehensive application through critical thinking is effectively addressed in classroom interactions between teachers and students as well as among students themselves. Post-class learning further consolidates and strengthens students' understanding and reflections from pre-class and in-class activities, cultivating their exploratory skills and academic research potential.

Under the guidance of the flipped classroom teaching model, College English instruction has addressed many longstanding challenges and exhibited significant improvements: teachers' teaching concepts have been updated, instructional methods have been enhanced, students' autonomous learning abilities have been strengthened, and course objectives have been effectively achieved. The research and practice of applying the flipped classroom to College English provide valuable insights and reference points for the reform of other courses in higher education institutions, contributing to broader pedagogical innovation and improvement.

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