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# Blended Learning in College English Listening and Speaking: Practice, Effectiveness, and Optimisation

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**Abstract: This study investigates the practical effectiveness and optimisation strategies of blended learning in college-level English listening and speaking courses. By examining how the model affects students' listening proficiency, learning motivation, and autonomy, the study also addresses challenges such as technological barriers and learner adaptability. A series of optimisation strategies are proposed, including the integration of teaching resources, instructional design, assessment system improvement, and the enhancement of teacher and learner competencies. The findings indicate that the blended learning model can significantly improve the effectiveness of English listening and speaking instruction in higher education, though further adjustments are needed to accommodate diverse pedagogical needs.**

**Keywords: Blended Teaching-and-Learning Model; College English; Listening Course; Teaching Practice; Optimisation Strategies**

## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalisation, listening and speaking skills in English have become core competencies for college students. Traditional teacher-centred and practice-driven instructional approaches are increasingly inadequate for meeting students' diverse learning needs. Blended learning, which integrates online self-directed learning with offline interactive instruction, has significantly enhanced the flexibility and interactivity of the learning process. This study demonstrates that the model effectively improves students' listening and speaking proficiency, learning motivation, and learner autonomy. It also proposes optimisation strategies to address implementation challenges, such as technological adaptation and shifting teacher-student roles, thus providing both theoretical underpinnings and practical solutions for reforming college English instruction. The research confirms that blended learning serves as a viable remedy for the limitations of traditional classroom instruction and represents a key direction for improving listening and speaking pedagogy.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations of the Blended Learning Model

The blended learning model draws theoretical support primarily from constructivism, theories of learner autonomy, and the flipped classroom approach. Together, these frameworks ensure the scientific and effective design of blended instruction.

Constructivism highlights the active role of learners in knowledge construction and views learning as an interactive process grounded in existing experiences and environments. Blended learning, by combining online self-study with in-person interaction, offers personalised learning paths that enhance college students' absorption and application of knowledge.

According to theories of autonomous learning, students' self-regulation plays a crucial role in determining learning outcomes. The blended model allows students to access online resources (e.g., MOOCs, micro-lectures) and independently structure their study pace, while benefiting from classroom instruction and feedback to enhance learning efficiency.

The flipped classroom model challenges the traditional "teach-then-learn" paradigm by advocating for pre-class knowledge delivery (e.g., via video lectures), reserving class time for discussion, practice, and deeper comprehension. This approach has been widely adopted within blended learning, particularly in college English listening courses, through a "preparation-interaction-extension" structure.

### 2.2 Research Progress at Home and Abroad

Internationally, research into blended learning has formed a relatively mature body of work,

especially in the areas of language education and the reform of college English listening and speaking curricula.

In language teaching, blended learning strategies have been extensively applied. Numerous studies confirm that integrating online and offline resources can enhance the adaptability and interactivity of language learning. Experimental implementations of blended listening and speaking courses on digital platforms have demonstrated that personalised learning plans and diverse interactive methods significantly boost students' oral proficiency. Mobile technologies such as WeChat and QQ have been shown to increase students' language input and output capabilities.

In the context of college English listening instruction, comprehensive reform studies have been conducted. Traditional methods often suffer from monotonous content, learner anxiety, and limited classroom interaction. Recent reforms have adopted a blended approach that combines mobile learning with flipped classrooms to improve instructional quality. Experimental studies show that multimedia multimodal methods significantly reduce learners' anxiety during listening tasks and boost their confidence in expression. Other research has introduced Content-Based Instruction (CBI) strategies for blended listening, aiming to enhance practical language competence through theme-based integration.

### 2.3 Research Gaps and Innovations

Despite progress, the application of blended learning in college English listening courses faces three key challenges:

first, the neglect of individual learner differences in technology use leads to polarised learning outcomes;

Second, over-reliance on summative assessments results in inadequate tracking of learning processes;

third, teachers struggle to transition into new roles, limiting their capacity to effectively guide students.

To address these issues, this study proposes three innovations:

1st, employing adaptive learning systems to mitigate technological barriers through intelligent recommendation mechanisms;

2nd, establishing a diversified assessment system that integrates online engagement with offline performance;

3rd, supporting teacher development through targeted professional training to enhance their blended teaching capabilities.

These innovations not only address gaps in existing research but also provide fresh theoretical and practical directions for the reform of listening and speaking instruction. Emphasising inclusivity in technology, comprehensiveness in evaluation, and professionalism in teaching, this study offers a systematic solution for applying blended learning in language courses.

## 3. Design and Practice of Hybrid Teaching Mode

### 3.1 Instructional Design

Blended learning requires systematic integration of online and offline resources to create a closed-loop learning ecosystem spanning pre-, mid-, and post-class activities. The online resource system adopted in this study features a three-tiered architecture: the foundational tier consists of high-quality MOOC content developed by renowned universities worldwide; the core tier comprises self-developed SPOCs (Small Private Online Courses), characterised by micro-lectures (8–12 minutes), authentic pronunciation materials (featuring various accents), and interactive exercises; the extension tier includes multimedia resources such as curated TED talks, BBC documentaries, and English-language podcasts, all graded in accordance with national college English standards. All resources are supported by intelligent captioning systems offering real-time speed control and keyword annotations, catering to learners of varying proficiency.

Offline instruction adheres to the "input-internalisation-output" principle of language acquisition and includes three main interactive formats: situational group discussions, task-based listening and speaking exercises, and immersive simulations. Each activity is governed by explicit assessment criteria, focusing on listening comprehension accuracy, fluency, communication strategies, and cultural awareness. A "3-2-5" time allocation model is employed: 30% for teacher demonstration, 20% for group preparation, and 50% for presentation and peer review, ensuring ample practice and skill enhancement.

### 3.2 Implementation Procedure

The instructional experiment was conducted at a coastal university, involving 70 non-English majors from the 2022 cohort. Participants were divided into an experimental group (n=35) and a control group (n=35) using stratified random sampling. No significant differences were found in their English proficiency (p=0.71) or technological readiness scores (p=0.84), ensuring experimental validity. The intervention lasted 15 weeks.

A rigorous three-phase instructional design was implemented. In the preparation phase (Weeks 1–2), experimental group students received platform training and completed learning style inventories. Teachers conducted joint lesson planning to unify online and offline standards and established online support teams. During the implementation phase (Weeks 3–12), a "teacher-assisted" model was employed: weekly cycles included 2 hours of online self-study, 2 hours of in-person interaction, and 1 hour of online reinforcement. Online modules were delivered via pre-recorded video lectures, while offline sessions were student-led. Formative assessments were conducted biweekly to adjust the learning pace based on performance. Three key control points (Weeks 4, 8, and 12) ensured instructional quality through learning analytics dashboards monitoring engagement, completion, and accuracy.

In the assessment phase (Weeks 13–15), standardised CET listening tests were used for final evaluation. Qualitative data were collected via questionnaires and focus group interviews, while behavioural analytics from the platform provided a comprehensive overview of teaching effectiveness.

### 3.3 Technical Support and Platform Selection

The study utilised the Moodle LMS provided by the university to support intelligent listening and speaking instruction. The platform's strengths include open-source customisation, cross-device data collection, and a rich plugin ecosystem. Its three core functional modules include:

(1) real-time pronunciation correction via integrated speech recognition,

(2) an adaptive recommendation system for autonomous learning, and

(3) a multimodal interactive learning environment. The auxiliary tool matrix includes video conferencing tools for interactive instruction, built-in speech modules for pronunciation training, and collaborative tools for group learning.

A triple safeguard system was established to ensure operational stability: diagnostic testing, emergency response protocols, and offline backup plans. All data were anonymised and securely stored on university servers in accordance with data protection standards. The system supports interoperability across platforms and offers real-time analytics, enabling teachers to generate reports and identify learners requiring intervention. This "core platform + smart modules + auxiliary tools" architecture provides robust, secure, and intelligent support for blended learning.

## 4. Effect Analysis and Problem Diagnosis

Through multi-dimensional data collection and system analysis, this study comprehensively evaluated the implementation effect of blended teaching mode in college English listening and speaking courses and made an in-depth diagnosis of the problems in the practice process.

### 4.1 Data Collection and Analysis

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to establish a tripartite data collection system. In terms of student performance, pre- and post-tests showed that students in the experimental group improved their listening scores by an average of 1.2 points compared with the control group ($p < 0.01$), with gains in fluency and lexical diversity being particularly significant. A questionnaire (N = 68, valid response rate 97.1%) revealed that 86% of students believed that blended learning facilitated improvement in listening skills, and 72% reported enhanced autonomy. In-depth interviews with 8 randomly selected participants underscored that context-based classroom activities and highly interactive online platforms were key contributors to improved learning outcomes. Observational data from 30 class sessions revealed a 32% increase in student participation in the experimental group compared to traditional teaching methods, especially in interactive and output-focused tasks.

### 4.2 Summary of Outcomes

The teaching intervention yielded notable outcomes in three areas. Firstly, students' listening skills improved structurally, evident not

only in standardised test scores but also in their communicative competence in real-life contexts. Secondly, learning motivation underwent a positive transformation, with 82% of surveyed students reporting increased interest in English learning. The completion rate of pre-class preparation tasks rose from 40% to 76%. Thirdly, learners' self-directed learning capabilities significantly advanced. Analysis of learning logs indicated that students gradually developed personalised learning strategies, such as using fragmented time for listening practice and actively sourcing supplementary materials online. Remarkably, this shift was observed across varying proficiency levels, demonstrating the model's wide applicability.

### 4.3 Problem Diagnosis

Despite the overall success, the study identified three key challenges in implementing the blended learning model. First, disparities in technological adaptability were apparent. Approximately 15% of students—particularly those with lower levels of digital literacy or weaker listening foundations—struggled with platform use, resulting in lower-than-expected participation in self-directed activities. Their average adaptation period was 2.3 weeks longer than their peers. Second, learners exhibited clear clustering characteristics. Cluster analysis identified three groups: proactive adapters (59%), passive followers (26%), and resistant learners (15%). The latter two groups showed poor self-regulation and resource utilisation. Third, teachers faced challenges in adapting to their evolving roles. Initially, due to a lack of experience, their guidance and support were either excessive (over-intervention) or insufficient (laissez-faire). Some students urgently needed structured guidance on activity design and online support schedules. In addition, individual differences in technological competence among teachers led to inconsistent instructional outcomes. These issues highlight the importance of addressing technological inclusivity, learner differentiation, and professional development in the implementation of blended learning.

## 5. Optimisation Strategies for the Blended Learning Model

Based on the effectiveness analysis and identified challenges, this study proposes a four-dimensional optimisation strategy from a systemic reform perspective to enhance the application of blended learning in college English listening and speaking instruction.

### 5.1 Optimising Instructional Resources

The development of personalised learning materials focused on creating a dynamic resource bank that intelligently matches content to learners' profiles. A detailed labelling system (e.g., thematic area, linguistic complexity, cultural context) was established to ensure accurate resource alignment. Emphasis was placed on integrating multimodal resources, facilitating seamless interaction among video, audio, and textual materials to form clearly themed, format-diverse learning modules. The use of authentic materials—reflecting real-life communication scenarios—was prioritised to enhance the authenticity and engagement of language input.

### 5.2 Optimising Teaching Processes

To bridge the gap between online and offline learning, a "bridging activity" strategy was devised. Each online learning module was paired with a corresponding offline extension task, forming a complete learning cycle. A layered teaching approach was implemented through a dynamic grouping system that adjusted task difficulty and activity modes based on real-time learning data. A three-tiered task structure-basic, advanced, and extended-enabled students to select their preferred learning pathways under instructor guidance. Furthermore, classroom time was restructured to allow for more personalised tutorial sessions, offering targeted support for learners at different proficiency levels.

### 5.3 Optimising Assessment Systems

A "three-dimensional" assessment framework was developed, focusing on linguistic skill development, performance during the learning process, and self-management capabilities. Innovative process-oriented evaluation tools and learning trajectory tracking systems were created to automatically record learner participation, progress, and effort. The feedback mechanism comprised three levels: real-time feedback targeting task execution; short-term feedback summarising stage achievements; and long-term feedback evaluating overall development. Special emphasis was placed on the integration of machine-generated and instructor-provided

feedback to create a complementary feedback ecosystem.

### 5.4 Enhancing Teacher and Learner Capabilities

In terms of teacher development, a comprehensive training system integrating technology, pedagogy, and research was established. Workshops, case studies, and classroom observations were used to enhance teachers' skills in designing ICT-supported instruction and interpreting learning data. A collaborative learning community was also formed to facilitate experience sharing and peer collaboration. For student development, a structured autonomous learning curriculum was designed, covering goal-setting, time management, and strategy selection. A "learning ability growth profile" was created to cultivate students' metacognitive awareness and foster scientific self-learning practices. A peer support mechanism was also implemented to build team learning capabilities through group-based collaboration and shared experiences.

## 6. Conclusion

This study confirms that the blended learning model significantly improves college students' listening and speaking proficiency while fostering their autonomy and collaborative communication skills. The four-dimensional optimisation strategy—comprising resource development, instructional processes, assessment systems, and teacher-learner development-proves to be both practical and effective, offering valuable insights for institutional educational reform.

However, the study's limitations in sample size and duration mean that long-term impacts remain to be fully evaluated. Future research should focus on three key areas: first, the further integration of intelligent platforms to develop personalised guidance systems for learning; second, the interdisciplinary synthesis of learning theories and instructional research to explore the cognitive mechanisms and innovative pedagogies of blended language acquisition; third, the construction of a "online-offline-mobile" triadic learning space to create a seamless language learning ecosystem. These efforts will propel blended learning towards greater intelligence, precision, and interdisciplinary fusion, injecting new momentum into the reform of college English listening and speaking education. The study recommends expanding the sample and extending the observation period to comprehensively assess the long-term effects of blended learning.

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