

Innovative Teaching Methods and Materials Design in College English Education



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Abstract: In the context of increasing globalization and digitalization, innovations in English teaching methods and materials design play a crucial role in meeting students' needs, improving learning outcomes, and adapting to social and technological developments. This article provides a comprehensive overview of these innovative approaches and designs in university English education, revealing the characteristics and limitations of existing teaching methods and materials, and analyzing them in light of students' and teachers' attitudes and feedback. The article further explores diversified teaching strategies and technology-driven teaching methods, describing their effectiveness and feedback.

Keywords: innovative teaching methods; instructional materials design; diversified teaching strategies

Introduction:

With the process of globalization and the rapid development of information technology, the field of English teaching is facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Students need to master the ability of cross-cultural communication and adapt to the changing working environment, and all these require educators to explore new teaching methods and materials design.

1. Current Situation of English Education in Universities

1.1 The main teaching methods currently used

In modern university English education, the main teaching methods used are lectures, interactive teaching, and technology-driven teaching methods. The lecture method, although often criticized as too monolithic and teacher-centered, is still widely used because of its ability to convey a large amount of information in a relatively short period, especially in large classrooms, where it is considered the most effective. However, the lecture method does not meet the needs of all students because it ignores the importance of active student participation and

individualized learning. As a result, interactive teaching is widely used in college English classes, where students are encouraged to participate in class discussions and activities to improve their critical thinking and communication skills. There are various forms of interactive teaching, such as group discussions, role plays, case studies, debates, etc. These methods not only encourage student participation but can also be customized to their interests and needs. However, despite its advantages, interactive teaching has many challenges in practice, such as the need for more time and resources, and the difficulty of assessing student performance. Another increasingly popular approach to teaching and learning is technology-driven instruction, which includes online learning, blended learning, and the use of tools such as artificial intelligence. For example, through online platforms, students can learn at any time and from any location, which provides them with greater flexibility. Blended learning combines the advantages of face-to-face instruction and online learning to provide a more engaging and interactive learning experience (Lin, 2020).

1.2 Main features and limitations of existing teaching materials

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In university English education, the main features of existing textbooks include extensive coverage of grammar and vocabulary, as well as diverse teaching resources. These textbooks usually adopt a shallow-to-intermediate approach, starting with basic vocabulary and grammar and gradually transitioning to more complex texts and contexts. Many of these materials are accompanied by audio and video materials so that students can improve their listening, reading, and writing skills simultaneously (Zhang & Wu, 2016). In addition, many textbooks also include a variety of practice questions and tests designed to help students reinforce what they have learned and to self-assess their progress. However, despite the many strengths of existing textbooks, there are some obvious limitations. First, many textbooks place too much emphasis on traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction at the expense of communicative competence development. Although learning grammar and vocabulary is important, this knowledge loses its meaning if it cannot be used effectively in real-world communicative contexts. Second, many textbooks lack knowledge of the cultural background. Learning a language is not only about learning grammar and vocabulary, it is about learning the cultural and social context in which the language is spoken. If this is neglected, students may experience difficulties in cross-cultural communication. In addition, although many textbooks provide audio and video materials, these materials are often teacher-centered and neglect student participation and interaction. This approach may lead to deficiencies in students' listening and speaking skills.

1.3 Students' and Teachers' Attitudes and Feedback on the current situation

Students and teachers' attitudes and feedback about the current situation of teaching English in college are mixed. Many students appreciate the detailed knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in textbooks, which they believe helps them build a solid foundation in English. However, many students also expressed concern about the over-reliance on

textbooks and the lack of training in practical communicative skills (Li, 2020). They expected more practical opportunities, such as role plays, project work, and team discussions, so that they could apply the theoretical knowledge they had learned in practice. In addition, some students gave feedback that they expected better integration of cultural elements and real-life situations in the textbooks, as they believed that this would help them to better understand and use English. Although many textbooks attempt to enhance listening and speaking skills training by providing audio and video materials, many students still feel inadequately trained in listening and speaking skills. They look forward to more opportunities to practice English in real-life language settings, such as language labs or language corners. From the teachers' perspective, they generally believe that existing teaching methods and materials provide an effective tool for imparting English language knowledge. However, they also acknowledge that they need more flexible and innovative teaching methods and materials in the face of an increasingly diverse student population and increasingly complex language learning needs. Particularly in the area of technology-driven instruction, many teachers say they welcome the use of new technological tools but are also confused about how to use them effectively for teaching and learning.

2. Innovative Teaching Methods

2.1 Diversified Teaching Strategies

In modern university English education, diversified teaching strategies have been widely used and promoted. These strategies focus on meeting different students' learning styles and needs, encourage students' active participation, and aim at improving students' communicative and critical thinking skills. One of the most popular teaching strategies is the "reverse classroom," in which students acquire basic knowledge by watching videos or reading materials before class and then learn in depth through discussion, analysis, and problem-solving in class (Cheng, 2006). This

strategy not only makes better use of class time but also increases student engagement and independent learning. Another important teaching strategy is "task-driven teaching", which emphasizes the improvement of students' communicative competence through practical language use tasks. In this model, students may be required to complete a project report in English or conduct a mock interview. This strategy helps connect language learning to real-life situations and increases students' motivation and communicative competence. In addition, "collaborative learning" is an effective teaching strategy that encourages students to work together in groups to solve problems or complete tasks. Through collaborative learning, students can not only learn but also improve their teamwork and leadership skills. While diverse teaching strategies are effective in many ways, they also require teachers to be highly flexible and innovative, as well as have good curriculum design and management skills. Moreover, to improve teaching effectiveness, teachers also need to be constantly attentive and reflective about students' needs and feedback. Overall, diverse teaching strategies offer new possibilities and opportunities for college English education but also present new challenges and demands.

2.2 Technology-driven teaching methods

Nowadays, technology is playing an increasingly important role in college English education. Technology-driven pedagogy has gone from a novel teaching tool to a necessary one due to its ability to provide rich resources, promote personalized learning, and stimulate students' interest in learning. First, through online learning platforms, teachers can provide students with access to rich learning resources, including articles, videos, audio, and interactive lessons (Shang, 2020). For example, teachers can use educational technology platforms to create interactive learning games and quizzes to increase engagement and fun in the classroom. In addition, teachers can use online collaboration tools, such as online documents, to facilitate collaborative learning among students. Second, teachers can use learning management systems and artificial

intelligence tools to personalize learning. For example, teachers can track students' learning progress through an LMS and then provide personalized feedback and tutoring based on student learning. In addition, some AI tools, such as smart coaches and adaptive learning systems, can automatically adjust the learning path and pace based on student learning, thus enabling truly personalized learning. Finally, technology can also improve students' communicative skills. For example, through video conferencing tools, students can engage in online oral practice and group discussions. In this way, students can practice English in an authentic context, not just in the classroom.

2.3 Effectiveness and Feedback of innovative teaching methods

In recent years, the application of innovative teaching methods in university English education has produced significant results. According to the feedback, these methods have increased students' motivation, enhanced their independent learning ability, and helped them acquire practical communicative skills (Li, 2014). Many students gave feedback that they liked methods such as reverse classroom, task-driven instruction, and collaborative learning because these methods allowed them to actively participate in the learning process rather than just passively receive knowledge. These methods provided more practice opportunities and gave them the chance to use English in authentic contexts, thus improving their communicative skills and self-confidence. On the teachers' side, they found that these innovative teaching methods provided more teaching flexibility, allowing them to adapt their teaching according to student's needs and feedback. In addition, these methods also help them to better stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning and enhance student engagement, thus improving teaching effectiveness. Feedback from students and teachers on technology-driven teaching methods has also been mostly positive. Students appreciate the convenience of being able to learn anytime and anywhere, as well as the rich learning resources and personalized learning experience.

Teachers, on the other hand, find that technology tools can help them manage lessons more effectively, track student's progress, and personalize instruction.

3. Innovative Materials Design

3.1 Student-centered materials design

Student-centered materials design is an important part of educational reform, which emphasizes students' learning needs and interests and promotes motivation through real-life contexts and tasks. Such materials are designed to include not only basic grammar and vocabulary knowledge but also rich cultural content and life situations so that students can learn and use English in authentic contexts (Liang , 2014). The tasks and activities in the materials encourage students to actively participate and collaborate, allowing them to discover and solve problems on their own as they complete the tasks. In addition, student-centered materials can make use of educational technologies, such as interactive lessons and online resources, to provide students with more learning options and personalized learning experiences. Overall, student-centered materials are designed with an emphasis on student agency, to enhance their interest and ability to learn and provide them with a practical, dynamic, and interactive learning environment.

3.2 Using Technology to enhance teaching materials

The use of technology to enhance teaching materials is an important feature of modern teaching and learning. First, by embedding video, audio, and interactive elements, materials can present content in a more engaging and lively way, providing a rich and diverse learning experience. For example, a chapter on British culture might include a video of real British people living in the UK, giving students a more visual understanding of British culture. Second, materials can use online quizzes and self-assessment tools to help students understand their progress in real-time and adjust their learning strategies. In addition, textbooks can use AI tools to provide personalized learning suggestions and pathways, adjusting content and difficulty to suit each student's

unique needs. Overall, through the use of technology, instructional materials not only provide a richer and more vivid learning experience but also support personalized learning, thereby improving the effectiveness and efficiency of learning.

3.3 Effectiveness and Feedback of innovative materials design

Innovative materials designs have shown significant results and received positive feedback. According to student and teacher feedback, these materials provide richer and more practical learning experiences that stimulate students' interest in learning and enhance their independent learning (Jiang , 2011). For example, students often appreciate the interactive elements and practical tasks in the materials because they allow them to use English for practical communication and problem-solving. Teachers also appreciate the flexibility and practicality of these materials, which they find can help them motivate students more effectively and enhance classroom engagement and dynamics. However, there are some challenges to innovative materials design; for example, some teachers and students report that they need time and support to adapt to these new materials and learning styles. Overall, the effects and feedback from the designs of the innovative materials show that these materials offer new possibilities and new challenges and demands for improving the quality and effectiveness of college English education.

Conclusion:

In summary, innovative teaching methods and materials design in university English education are bringing about an educational revolution. These changes address the limitations of existing teaching methods and materials by adopting more diverse teaching strategies and technology-driven approaches aimed at better meeting students' learning needs, improving their language skills, and adapting to social and technological developments. The student-centered design of materials and the use of technology to enhance them make teaching and learning activities more lively and interesting and

help motivate students. However, these innovations also bring new challenges, such as the need for students and teachers to adapt to new ways of learning and teaching, which require ongoing research and practice by educators to better address these challenges.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

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