RESEARCH ARTICLE

Research on Innovative Pathways for Blended Teaching Models in Higher Vocational English Oral Communication through Digital Technology Empowerment—A Case Study of Higher Vocational Institutions in the Greater Bay Area

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Abstract: At present, digital technologies have been widely integrated into the field of education, bringing about profound changes in both the instructional forms and pedagogical models of English-speaking instruction in higher vocational colleges. Blended learning, which combines online and offline instructional approaches, effectively addresses common challenges in traditional vocational English-speaking classrooms, such as low levels of student engagement and limited opportunities for oral output. Taking higher vocational colleges in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area as the research context, this study first examines the value and current status of digitally empowered blended English speaking instruction, and summarizes the major problems encountered in practical teaching implementation. It then systematically explores the implementation pathways of a digitally empowered blended teaching model for vocational English speaking from several perspectives, including the reconstruction of teaching resource systems, integrated design of the teaching process, establishment of high-frequency oral output mechanisms, innovation in teaching evaluation models, and transformation of teachers' roles. This study aims to provide practical references for optimizing English-speaking instructional models in higher vocational education and enhancing overall teaching quality.

Keywords: digital technology empowerment, vocational English, blended English speaking teaching model, innovative pathways

1. Introduction

Oral communicative competence is a key indicator for evaluating higher vocational students' comprehensive language application ability. However, in actual teaching practice, English speaking instruction in higher vocational colleges in the Greater Bay Area continues to face a number of challenges due to constraints such as limited classroom time, traditional teaching models, and students' diverse learning backgrounds. These challenges are reflected in issues including insufficient teaching efficiency and the need to further enrich students' learning experiences. The empowerment of digital technologies has provided new possibilities for the transformation of instructional forms. A variety of digital educational platforms enable English-speaking instruction to transcend the limitations of traditional classrooms and foster an open and diversified instructional ecosystem. From this perspective, exploring the effective integration of digital technologies into vocational English speaking instruction and constructing a scientific and sustainable blended teaching model on this basis has become a major direction of reform in higher vocational English education.

2. The Value of Digitally Empowered Blended Teaching Models for Vocational English Speaking Instruction

2.1 Enhancing vocational students' English oral communicative competence

The application of digital technologies effectively overcomes the limitations of time and space inherent in traditional classroom instruction, enabling students to access diversified learning resources continuously before, during, and after class. Through these resources, students can improve their

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pronunciation, intonation, and pragmatic competence from multiple perspectives, thereby forming a more comprehensive learning experience (Xiang, 2024). In addition, blended teaching emphasizes the learning process, with particular attention to output, interaction, and feedback. Teachers design diversified speaking tasks that encourage students to engage in repeated expression, correction, and re-expression, gradually developing more stable oral output abilities.

Within this learning model, students no longer passively receive knowledge transmitted by teachers. Instead, they actively participate in learning activities within a digital environment, engage in oral communication with greater confidence, and progressively overcome anxiety and avoidance commonly associated with speaking tasks. As a result, students' fluency and accuracy in language expression are enhanced, facilitating a shift from "learning English" to "using English" in authentic communicative contexts.

2.2 Optimizing the structure of vocational English classroom instruction

Blended teaching models empowered by digital technologies significantly contribute to the optimization of classroom instructional structures in vocational English education. In the online component, students utilize digital platforms to engage in language learning, skills training, and autonomous pre-class preparation. Consequently, more classroom time can be devoted to teacher–student interaction, oral communication, and immediate feedback, thereby improving the effectiveness and relevance of in-class instruction (Guan, 2023).

Moreover, digital technologies enable teachers to obtain real-time teaching and learning data that are traceable and visualizable. These data allow teachers to adjust instructional pacing and focus based on students' learning processes, enhancing both classroom time utilization and learning outcomes. As a result, classroom organization becomes more efficient and coherent, instructional content gains a clearer hierarchical structure, and a solid foundation is established for students' oral language development.

2.3 Providing a reference paradigm for regional vocational English teaching reform

Educational reform at the regional level is often grounded in successful and replicable instructional paradigms. Under the empowerment of digital technologies, blended teaching models for vocational English speaking instruction can gradually form

pedagogical paradigms with strong referential value through sustained practice, enabling broader dissemination and application among educators.

This model emphasizes the systematic integration of instructional objectives, learning processes, and evaluation mechanisms. Teachers are required to ensure that technological applications serve pedagogical goals, rather than functioning as mere supplementary tools. Instead, digital technologies should demonstrate their structural and holistic advantages within instructional design (Jiang & Zhang, 2025). Given the diversity in instructional environments and student characteristics among regional vocational colleges, education authorities can allocate resources more scientifically by adopting this model, promoting coordinated development in curriculum construction, instructional organization, and quality assurance. Ultimately, this approach contributes to the establishment of a collaborative, stable, and sustainable vocational English teaching system.

3. Characteristics and Existing Problems of Blended English Speaking Instruction in the Greater Bay Area
3.1 Characteristics of English speaking instruction in Greater Bay Area vocational colleges

English-speaking instruction in vocational colleges within the Greater Bay Area places strong emphasis on cultivating students' practical application abilities. Both instructional objectives and content selection prioritize the development of communicative competence and intercultural awareness. Teachers highlight the practicality, contextuality, and communicative nature of spoken English, enabling students to recognize the significance of English learning. Under teachers' guidance, students focus on integrating linguistic form and communicative function, actively participate in diverse speaking activities, and lay a solid foundation for future employment or advanced learning (Cheng, 2025).

From the perspective of student composition, vocational colleges in the Greater Bay Area enroll students from diverse regions, resulting in substantial differences in English proficiency levels. Consequently, oral instruction exhibits differentiated demands in terms of instructional pace, difficulty, and organizational methods. With continuous improvements in institutional conditions, instructional resource allocation and learning environments have become increasingly improved,

providing favorable infrastructural support for the exploration of blended teaching models.

3.2 Existing problems in the application of digital technologies in vocational English speaking instruction

Although blended teaching models have achieved certain positive outcomes in vocational English speaking instruction in the Greater Bay Area, several issues remain evident. First, significant disparities exist across courses and among teachers regarding the depth and modes of digital technology application, limiting the overall effectiveness of technology-enhanced instruction. Second, insufficient alignment between online and offline teaching leads to fragmented content and dispersed objectives in instructional design, preventing the formation of a coherent and continuous learning system.

Third, within blended teaching contexts, digital platforms still provide limited guidance and support for students' learning processes. During autonomous learning, students may exhibit low engagement or superficial participation, which inevitably hinders substantive improvement in oral proficiency. Fourth, current evaluation practices remain predominantly outcome-oriented, with insufficient attention to learning processes, oral performance development, and intercultural competence. As a result, digital technologies fail to generate precise feedback that could effectively inform instructional improvement.

4. Innovative Pathways for Digitally Empowered Blended Teaching Models in Vocational English Speaking Instruction

4.1 Reconstruction of oral teaching resource systems based on digital platforms

With digital technological support, teaching resources have shifted from a traditional "text-centered" format to a "multimodal integration" approach. Teachers can simultaneously present audio, images, videos, interactive tasks, and situational simulations, immersing students in more authentic and multidimensional language environments (Chen, 2025). In this context, teachers can reconstruct oral teaching resource systems, overcoming limitations of traditional classroom resource provision and achieving structured organization and tiered allocation of resources.

Specifically, teachers can systematically reorganize existing oral English resources on digital platforms according to instructional objectives, categorizing them into four modules: language input, oral practice, situational communication, and

evaluation support. The language input module may include standard pronunciation demonstrations, intonation imitation audio, and authentic contextual dialogue videos for pre-class listening and speaking practice. The oral practice module can incorporate tiered speaking tasks such as sentence imitation, situational completion, and structured expression exercises. In the situational communication module, teachers design diverse virtual communicative scenarios to support contextualized oral practice. The evaluation support module automatically generates learning records and developmental trajectories of students' speaking abilities, providing valuable data for instructional decision-making. Through a cycle of "pre-class input — online practice — in-class expression — post-class consolidation," students achieve a complete and coherent learning experience.

4.2 Process-Oriented integration of online and offline oral teaching

A process-oriented approach requires teachers to divide learning activities into preparation, practice, and consolidation stages, embedding digital technologies throughout each phase to enable precise resource allocation. Accordingly, teachers can design a teaching sequence of "online preparation—offline practice — online consolidation" aligned with oral instructional objectives (Wang et al., 2026).

During the pre-class phase, teachers release digital learning packages that include pronunciation materials, expression structure demonstrations, and situational practice videos. Students complete listening discrimination, imitation, and oral expression tasks and submit recordings online. In classroom instruction, teachers analyze aggregated learning data to identify common problems and provide targeted guidance while organizing interactive speaking activities such as group collaboration, role-play dialogues, and diversified presentations. In the post-class phase, teachers assign reinforcement tasks through digital platforms, enabling students to refine and expand their oral performance and gradually transition from imitation-based expression to autonomous language production.

4.3 High-Frequency oral output and authentic interaction mechanisms supported by digital technologies

Improving the effectiveness of vocational English speaking instruction in the Greater Bay Area requires increasing both the frequency and quality of students' oral output. Traditional classroom constraints make it difficult to provide sufficient speaking opportunities for all learners. The

integration of digital technologies enables the establishment of high-frequency oral output systems, transforming practice from "classroom-centered output" to "multi-temporal, routine output," thereby enhancing learner autonomy (Li & Huang, 2025).

Teachers can construct a comprehensive training system encompassing "daily output — classroom interaction — extended communication." Pre-class and post-class tasks may include brief, high-frequency speaking activities such as impromptu topic responses, situational recordings, or concise opinion statements. In-class activities focus on face-to-face interaction, including workplace simulations, collaborative discussions on social issues, and spontaneous exchanges. Digital platforms can further support peer feedback and interactive responses, extending communicative space. Through continuous engagement across learning contexts, oral practice becomes habitual rather than episodic, strengthening students' communicative competence through sustained application.

4.4 Innovation in English speaking assessment models based on data feedback

Traditional assessment practices in vocational English speaking instruction primarily rely on periodic testing, which fails to capture the dynamic development of oral competence. Digital technologies enable real-time data collection and analysis of students' learning processes, providing objective support for both formative and summative assessment (Guo, 2025).

Data-based feedback helps students monitor learning trajectories, practice frequency, and performance changes, mitigating the tendency to overemphasize outcomes at the expense of learning processes. Most importantly, this approach enhances learners' metacognitive awareness, fostering reflective learning habits and goal-oriented self-regulation. Consequently, assessment shifts from a result-oriented model to a development-oriented framework.

Teachers can continuously monitor students' oral practice frequency, task completion quality, recording duration, and participation rates, constructing multidimensional evaluation systems. Visualized reports provide students with timely feedback for self-assessment, while teachers analyze class-level and individual data to deliver targeted instructional guidance. By integrating process data with performance outcomes, individualized learning portfolios are established, resulting in more objective and comprehensive evaluation outcomes.

4.5 Transformation of teacher roles and development of digital teaching competence

To ensure sustainable quality improvement in digitally empowered blended English-speaking instruction, teachers must redefine professional roles and enhance instructional competencies. Unlike traditional models focused on knowledge transmission and classroom control, blended learning environments require teachers to function as designers, facilitators, and supporters of learning. This transformation demands not only solid linguistic expertise but also curriculum integration skills, instructional process design capabilities, and flexible application of digital tools.

Vocational English teachers in the Greater Bay Area can systematically design blended courses with clearly defined online and offline responsibilities and continuously reflect on instructional effectiveness. By analyzing learning data in advance, teachers can identify common challenges and individual differences, informing classroom interaction strategies. During instruction, teachers should prioritize guidance and feedback rather than repetitive practice. Post-class reflection supported by platform analytics further refines instructional planning. Through sustained practice and reflection, teachers gradually transition from "technology users" to "instructional designers" capable of navigating digitally mediated learning environments.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, innovation in digitally empowered blended teaching models for vocational English speaking instruction represents not merely an upgrade of instructional tools but a comprehensive transformation of pedagogical philosophy, instructional structure, and teaching practices. By systematically examining instructional value, contextual foundations, and innovative pathways, this study demonstrates that appropriate application of digital technologies expands learning spaces, optimizes classroom structures, enhances the scientific rigor of assessment, and promotes teachers' professional development. In future reforms, vocational English teachers in the Greater Bay Area should continue exploring effective blended teaching models centered on learning processes and competence development, avoiding superficial technology use and achieving deep integration of online and offline instruction to sustainably empower students' holistic development.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest in this work.

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