

A Flipped Classroom Approach to the Teaching of Comprehensive Business English

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ABSTRACT

A flipped classroom approach has been gaining increasing popularity with both teachers and students on the ground that it not only motivates students to complete the tasks outside school, but also enables students to take advantages of the affordances offered by digital technology. In recent years, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into flipped learning environments has further expanded these affordances, offering personalized, adaptive, and interactive learning experiences. This paper aims to capitalize on this approach to reforming the teaching of comprehensive business English for enhancing students learning experience thus to improve their learning performance. The paper points out the current teaching status quo of comprehensive business English, analyzes the advantages of a flipped classroom approach enhanced by AI tools in teaching this course, then introduces the teaching design for such an approach. At last, this paper comes to a conclusion that with this approach to teaching comprehensive business English, teachers could make students more engaged in classroom by answering their questions and clearing their doubts, more importantly, by providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their business skills in English with AI support, students are highly motivated to get involved in both the teacher-created online teaching resources and in-class activities.

KEYWORDS

A flipping classroom approach; Comprehensive business English; Teaching; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Personalized learning

1 Introduction

According to *National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of Business English Major in Colleges and Universities*, comprehensive business English is one of the core courses for business English majors. It aims to cultivate students' ability to carry out business communication in international business. At the completion of this course, students should be able to accurately understand the spoken and written business English, to complete oral communication tasks with accurate, clear, fluent and appropriate English and to fulfill business communication tasks with accurate, coherent, concise and appropriate written English. In a word, it is with the purpose of promoting the comprehensive application of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating skills through business communication tasks ^[1].

The rapid evolution of educational technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), presents new opportunities to achieve these objectives more effectively. AI-driven tools can simulate real-world business interactions, provide instant feedback, and tailor learning pathways, thereby complementing the flipped classroom model to create a more dynamic and responsive learning ecosystem ^[2].

2 Current Teaching Status Quo of Comprehensive Business English

The lecture, a teaching-learning strategy where instructors directly communicate curricular information to students, is the most common teaching strategy employed in higher education ^[3]. Most teachers are still adopting the traditional ways in teaching comprehensive Business English, that is to say, teachers play the most important role in the classroom by presenting and explaining ideas while students sit there trying to follow teachers' instruction. Even though there are interactions between teachers and students, they are quite far from satisfactory because students couldn't provide in-depth answers. In general, there are several predicaments in the traditional teaching in comprehensive Business English. First, the classroom teaching time is very limited. Every unit in comprehensive business English contains lots of contents, such as business background information, listening and speaking exercise, translation and writing and so on. Sometimes, even the introduction of business background will take 15 to 30 minutes because students are not familiar with them. The explanation of the text will consume much more time. There is no doubt that teachers will take the teacher-centered teaching approach in order to let students know all that they want the students to know or to master. Nowadays, most universities are trying to cut the credits for theoretical courses. What teachers can do is to reduce both units and teaching activities. In fact, it is a dilemma for teachers to choose between more contents and more interactions especially when the teaching periods are getting less and less. Second, there is not enough time for students to internalize their knowledge gained in the classroom and to practice business skills ^[4]. Due to the limited class hours, teachers, unwillingly, have to trust students that they will finish the tasks of internalizing knowledge and practicing business skills outside the classroom because the teachers want to spend most time in interpreting the texts, which to certain extent, is more necessary. But to our disappointment, students are not motivated enough to carry out the expected activities outside the classrooms. Most students lack the initiative to engage himself in finding a partner and practicing business English because they know

there is not enough time for them to exhibit their skills in classroom. Besides, without the teachers' feedback, they don't have an accurate evaluation about their performance. Third, it's really hard or impossible to carry out differentiated teaching. As we all know that every student is a special entity whose master of English is quite different from others'. When we are teaching comprehensive business English in the traditional way, we can only take most of the students' English command into consideration and assume that their English are almost the same. However, the truth is that some of them can fully understand what we aim to explain while others can only understand half of it. Fourth, teachers have less opportunities to obtain enough feedback from the students to assess how much they have understood because of the limited time and limited interaction.

The integration of AI into this landscape can help mitigate these challenges. AI-powered platforms can provide scalable, individualized practice outside class, offer immediate feedback on language use, and generate analytics that help teachers understand student preparedness before class, thus making in-class time more focused and interactive^[5].

3 Advantages of a Flipped Classroom Approach in teaching Comprehensive Business English

When it comes to implementing the restructuring and re-organisation of learning activities within and away from the classroom in both synchronous and asynchronous modes, flipped classrooms leverage many kinds of digital technologies. Today, these are powerfully augmented by Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, natural language processing (NLP) applications, and adaptive learning platforms can personalize the pre-class stage, analyze student engagement patterns, and provide data-driven insights for teachers^[6]. Therefore, it has several obvious benefits as follows. Firstly, it provides a medium that makes differentiated teaching possible and easy for students' abilities, with AI algorithms automatically adjusting content difficulty and type based on learner performance^[7]. Secondly, it makes the review of ideas and concepts more easily by students' pausing and rewinding of recorded presentations, and AI can further enhance this by generating customized review quizzes or highlighting areas of weakness. Thirdly, it can demonstrate a greater transparency for students about their learning purposes and progress through AI dashboards. Last but not least, it offers a greater opportunity for teachers to be fully aware of students' progress through detailed analytics provided by AI systems^[8]. In a word, in the flipped classroom, lectures in the form of online videos are viewed outside of class time, creating the opportunity for teachers to provide mentorship and guidance during class hours (FLN 2014). Teachers use the flipped classroom approach because of its potential to increase the depth of engagement without sacrificing the amount of content and efficiency of delivery inherent in the lecture-based approach^[9]. The addition of AI strengthens this potential by automating routine tasks, enabling deeper personalization, and fostering interactive, simulation-based practice^[10]. Therefore, it is easy to achieve the following goals:

(a) to increase students responsibility and motivation in their own learning process through AI-driven gamification and adaptive challenges.

(b) to increase students activity during the course via AI-facilitated interactive exercises and conversational agents.

(c) to support effective collaboration between students using AI tools that can match peers for tasks or mediate group discussions.

(d) to develop project tasks which increase individuality, responsibility, and creativity with AI as a research and analysis assistant.

(e) to have a better command of business English through continuous practice with AI that provides pronunciation feedback, writing correction, and genre-specific language modeling^[11].

4 Teaching Design for a Flipped Classroom Approach to Teaching Comprehensive Business English

In order to make the best use of the flipped classroom approach, the teachers should read the texts carefully and think about a good teaching design for students. That is to say, they should choose contents wisely, providing either teacher-invented videos or online videos, and strategically integrate AI tools to support each stage.

As a core courses for business English majors, comprehensive business English contains lots of contents. It is really hard to contain all the information or business skills for students to digest before the class without breaking it down into several tasks. So it's a good way to divide the teaching process into three stages, namely pre-class, in-class and after-class process^[12] as shown in Figure 1, with AI serving as a supportive layer throughout.

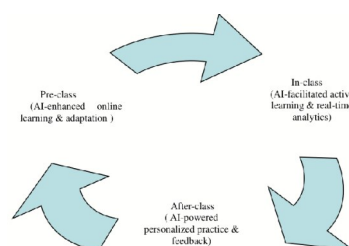


Figure 1

4.1 Pre-class Stage

In this stage, teachers should record or find videos covering basic language points and business concepts and skills. This is a huge challenge to most teachers because the workload is so high. Teachers should choose a suitable platform to upload their teaching materials, such as videos, audios, exercise and tests and so on. AI can significantly reduce this burden. Teachers can use AI-powered content curation tools to find and recommend relevant materials, or use text-to-speech and video generation AI to create diverse learning resources efficiently^[13]. Furthermore, adaptive learning platforms (e. g., those using AI) can deliver these materials differentially based on a diagnostic assessment of each student's entering level. Teachers need to keep in mind that all these materials must be selected wisely. For one thing, teachers should make sure that the teaching material is closely linked with their teaching objectives and it highlights what they should master before deepening their understanding towards a certain business concept or activity. Teachers should also be confident that it's a combination of language points with business knowledge. AI can help by tagging resources with specific competency markers and learning outcomes. As the name suggests that comprehensive business English should provide students chances to practice every aspect of business English, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. AI-powered language apps can provide interactive practice in all these areas before class, giving students preliminary feedback. Teachers should not give a preference to any aspect and ignore other aspects. At the same time, teachers should try to combine text, animation, screen capture demonstrations to create a relaxing atmosphere for students to study. AI can even help personalize this atmosphere by adjusting interface themes or suggestion breaks based on student engagement metrics. Only in this way can students have a high engagement in this pre-class stage and complete the pre-class assignments with passion and enthusiasm.

4.2 In-class Stage

By analyzing students' autonomic learning data from AI-enhanced platforms, teachers can prepare for the in-class stage teaching well. One of the key objectives is to cultivate students' intercultural ability. In order to fulfill this one, teachers should work on designing appropriate class activities to help students to practice what they have got from the pre-class video watching. AI can facilitate these activities. For example, conversational AI avatars can role-play as international clients for students to negotiate with, providing a safe space for practice^[14]. To start with, teachers should allocate a small segment of in-class time to reviewing the online content using micro-lessons or hands-on exercises at the beginning of a class. An AI polling tool can quickly gauge common misunderstandings. Next, teachers can organize to discuss certain key issues. Take unit three in Business English-An Integrated Course as an example. Teachers can ask students to compare the welfare system in U.S with that in U.K to develop students critical thinking and intercultural thinking. An AI research assistant (like a tailored chatbot) could help students quickly gather comparative data. During this stage, students play the most important role. They can ask all kinds of questions that baffle them when watching the videos. Having watched the video before class, students are able to grasp basic concepts before class; therefore, they are more likely to put forward an advanced question naturally in classroom when the teachers are available. AI note-taking assistants can help document these questions and discussions for later review. One thing that all teachers should bear in mind is that they can only organize and guide students, check and answer their questions. They should by no means play the leading role in the classroom. On the contrary, students should play the dominant role by asking questions, giving their PowerPoint presentation, role plays and so on. AI presentation coaches can provide real-time feedback on pacing, clarity, or language use during student presentations. Hands-on learning experience is a positive one which can help them to maintain attention, and ultimately increase their efficiency.

4.3 After-class Stage

The main task for this stage is to provide a tailored learning experience for students to consolidate their previous learning. This is where AI's capacity for personalization shines. On the one hand, teachers should give them assignments related to what they have gained during the class and the assignment can be a business report, a mini-business play, a debate or simply a reading comprehension test and so on. AI writing assistants can help students draft and refine business reports, while AI simulation platforms can host virtual debates or role-plays. On the other hand, students should avail of every opportunity to show what they have learned and act it out according to the teachers' requirement. AI can provide automated, detailed feedback on these performances, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in both language and business acumen[18]. In this way, students can build up their confidence by more participation and better their English as we all know that practice makes perfect, especially when practice is accompanied by intelligent, immediate feedback.

With these three stages serving as an integral and cyclic unity, enhanced by AI tools, students will be able to internalize both knowledge and business skills in a more engaging, efficient, and personalized manner, which will significantly enhance their learning experience and performance.

5 Conclusion

Compared with the traditional teaching mode, a flipped classroom approach reverses the sequence by asking students to study videos provided by teachers first, which enables students to determine their learning progress according to their own schedule and achieve personalized learning to a certain extent. The integration of Artificial Intelligence into this model deepens this personalization, making it more dynamic and responsive to individual learner needs^[16]. Relatively abundant classroom time gives students more opportunities to internalize knowledge and train skills, and teachers' guidance and feedback are also more timely and individualized^[17], especially when informed by AI analytics. With the AI-enhanced flipped classroom approach to teaching comprehensive business English, teachers will be able to make good use of the limited time to have a better interaction with students and put an emphasis to clearing their doubt and answering the puzzling questions. Based on this, on the one hand, students will be able to attach importance to practicing their business skills via English language in immersive AI-simulated environments. On the other hand, they will fulfill the objectives of cultivating their business thinking, enhancing their learning experience and having a good command of business English through continuous, adaptive practice. Shifted away from teacher centered instruction to student centered learning, a flipped classroom approach, supercharged by AI, will be conducive to increasing students' efficiency, efficacy and performance. For teachers who face the challenge of the twin demands of covering the prescribed curriculum and catering for a range of students' learning needs, it is worth popularizing and investing in the necessary training to leverage these powerful tools^[18].

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