

An Action Research of the Integration of MUSIC Model and Blended Teaching to Enhance Student Motivation in EFL Education

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ABSTRACT: The emergence of the modern information technologies (MIT) has revolutionized the dissemination of knowledge, deepening the integration of MIT and foreign language education. Under this context, an action research is conducted in an EFL setting. Firstly, based on the preliminary diagnosis and SWOT analysis, the current research identifies the key strengths and weaknesses of college English learning motivation under the context of the deep integration of MIT and foreign language education. Then under the framework of the MUSIC Model, it demonstrates how the integration of MUSIC model and blended teaching is implemented in the EFL class, with the aim of helping EFL students become strategic learners with positive learning motivation traits in the era of informatization and intelligentization on one hand, such as clear goal orientation, strong sense of self-efficacy, positive affective states, and feeling empowered, etc.; on the other hand, reconstructing a teaching model based on the MUSIC model to improve the blended teaching model in college English education. The result shows that overall, the integration of MUSIC model and blended teaching play a positive role in enhancing student motivation in the EFL class. In the end, some limitations of the current research that could potentially be addressed by future research are acknowledged.

KEYWORDS- Action research, Blended teaching, EFL, Modern information technology, Student Motivation, SWOT.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of informatization and intelligentization, multimedia technology, along with modern information technologies (MIT) such as big data, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, has become a vital tool in foreign language education and teaching, which make traditional teaching peculiarly unadaptable to the requirements of educational information technology. As a result, students from the post-1990s, sometimes referred to as “Internet Aborigines,” are becoming discontented with the traditional EFL classrooms featured by lack of motivation, test-oriented teaching, passive learning, low student engagement, etc. The emergence of the modern information technologies has revolutionized the dissemination of knowledge, transitioning from a unidirectional flow to a student-centered approach to learning. In this new landscape, students are bestowed with increased agency, empowered to navigate an array of resources accessible via the internet. Nonetheless, this shift concurrently ushers in a set of novel obstacles, particularly in terms of fostering students’ intrinsic motivation to actively engage in their educational endeavors. One of the causes is that some EFL teachers fail to include motivation as a fundamental component of the entire English learning process and provide insufficient motivational support for network independent learning. Second, many students rely too heavily on their instructors and have low initiative when it comes to studying English. In addition, they lack assistance for navigating the Internet’s wealth of material, making it impossible for them to fulfill the criteria of English learning in the era of informatization and intelligentization.

“The motivation for foreign language learning cannot be separated from social and technological realities of the constantly evolving learning environments” (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021, p.11). The purpose of this research is to help EFL students become strategic learners with positive learning motivation traits in the era of informatization and intelligentization, such as clear goal orientation, strong sense of self-efficacy, positive affective states, and feeling empowered. It also provides valuable insights and reference for EFL teachers to identify the bottleneck factors influencing students’ English learning motivation and optimize motivational strategies, as well as improve the blended teaching model in college English education.

II. ACTION RESEARCH

To change the status quo and help EFL students become strategic learners with positive learning motivation characteristics in the era of informatization and intelligentization, the following action research adapted from Cummings and Worley’s (2013) Action Research Model (“often considered synonymous with organization development”, p.25) is conducted. The action research of the current research consists of six steps, as shown in Figure 1.

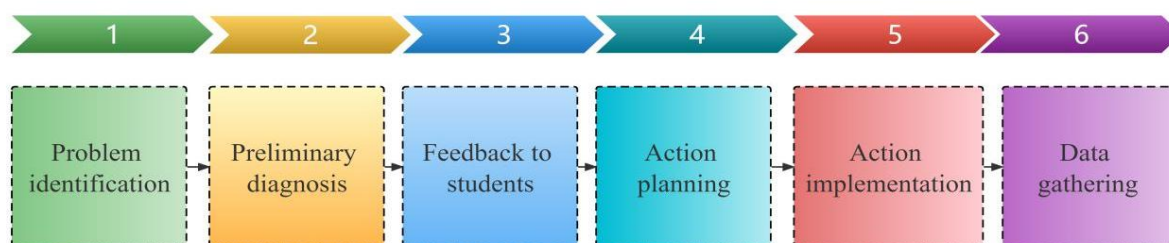


Figure 1. Action Research Model of the Current Research

2.1 Problem Identification

This stage begins when the researcher senses that there is a prevailing and urgent issue that needs to be addressed. The researcher taught exactly the same contents yet observed different reactions. A few students seemed to be more motivated and engaged in the blended EFL class while others demonstrate the opposite.

2.2 Preliminary Diagnosis

This stage involves gathering appropriate information and analyzing it to determine the underlying causes of the problem. The methods of gathering data in the current research are semi-structured interview, the researcher’s observation, the MUSIC Inventory developed by Brett Jones (Jones, 2012). The data was then analyzed using a SWOT matrix to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the blended EFL class as well as threats and opportunities, as summarized in Figure 2.

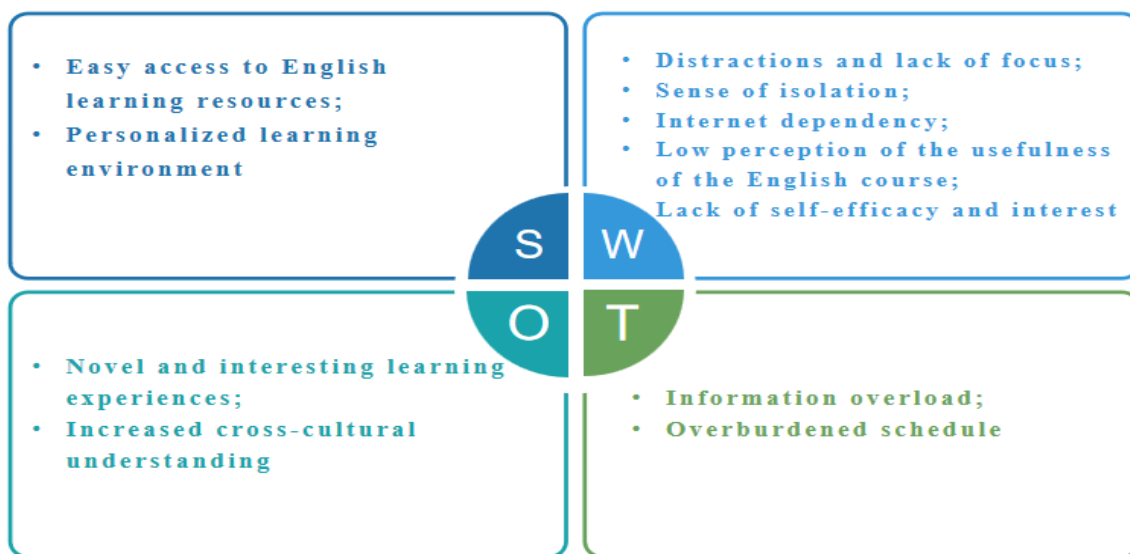


Figure 2. SWOT Analysis of the Data

Based on the SWOT analysis, the motivation of college students in English learning in the era of informatization is analyzed from the following four aspects:

Strengths:

- Convenient access to English learning resources: The era of informatization provides a wealth of learning resources, enabling college students to access various English learning materials anytime and anywhere through the Internet, such as online tutorials, course videos, learning Apps, etc.
- Personalized learning environment: MIT has enabled students to learn in different ways that suit their learning styles. Learning platforms and tools can be customized tailing to students' learning needs and interests, stimulating their learning interests.

Weaknesses:

- Distractions and lack of focus: Some students struggle with self-discipline, unable to reasonably arrange their study time and plans, which may lower their enthusiasm for studying English because the learning environment in the information age is rife with distractions.
- Sense of isolation: Since many English classes these days are delivered online rather than in person, some students perceive a lack of engagement and communication with the teachers. This may have an adverse effect on their motivation to study.
- Internet dependency. Excessive reliance on modern information technology may lead to some students being too passive in English learning, lacking the ability to make decisions about some aspects of their learning.
- Low perception of usefulness of the English course. Some students lack motivation to connect English learning with their short-term goals or future career development.
- Lack of self-efficacy. Some students find it difficult to make proper use of abundant resources because they lack the self-learning skills or clear learning goals. When encountering difficulties in the process of self-learning, they are prone to feeling frustrated, which in turn affects their sense of self-efficacy.

Opportunities:

- Diversification of learning methods and styles: In the information age, innovation and variety in English learning offer fresh and engaging learning opportunities that may boost students' motivation to study.

Threats:

- Information overload: Some students feel overwhelmed and confused by the vast quantity of knowledge available in today's digital age. Their English learning motivation is likely to be affected because they feel overburdened or find it difficult to get started.

- Overburdened schedule: With the addition of online courses and remote learning, some students feel overwhelmed with their packed schedules, which can lead to increased stress and anxiety.

2.3 Feedback to Students

The researcher provides the students with all relevant and useful data, which helps them determine the strengths and weaknesses of their English study in the blended EFL class.

2.4 Action Planning

Under the framework of the MUSIC (acronym for eMpowerment, Usefulness, Success, Interest, Caring) Model of Motivation (Jones, 2009, 2018) and related motivation theories, this study focuses on EFL students' learning motivation and explores its changes in the context of the deep integration of MIT and foreign language education. Based on the preliminary diagnosis and SWOT analysis, the current research aims to achieve the following objectives:

a. Identify the challenges in college English learning motivation under the context of the deep integration of MIT and foreign language education, and the factors that affect college English learning motivation.

b. Reveal the dynamic interactive development track of learners and MIT, optimize college students' English learning methods and help them become strategic learners with positive learning motivation traits in the era of informatization and intelligentization, such as clear goal orientation, strong sense of self-efficacy, positive affective states, and feeling empowered, etc.

c. Reconstruct a teaching model based on the MUSIC model to improve the blended teaching model in college English education.

d. Optimize the curriculum of comprehensive English and achieve the unity of instrumental and humanistic aspects of college English.

To integrate MUSIC motivational elements with blended college English teaching, the following strategies can be implemented:

Empowerment:

- Provide students with opportunities for autonomy and self-directed learning. Incorporate interactive online platforms and resources that allow students to make choices about their learning paths and pace.

- Create teaching environment that respects students' differences in learning styles, abilities, and other aspects, and allow students to reasonably control their learning.

Usefulness:

- Align English learning activities with real-world applications and career relevance, raising students' awareness to connect English learning with their future career development. Integrate authentic materials and tasks that simulate real-life situations, such as role-playing exercises or case studies.

- Utilize technology tools and resources that enhance language skills, such as language-learning applications, speech recognition software, and online language exchange platforms.

- Provide opportunities for students to match EFL learning motivation with their values through self-learning, leadership, and collaboration.

Success:

- Set clear and achievable learning goals for each lesson or module. Provide students with regular feedback and reinforcement to track their progress and celebrate their achievements.

- Offer support and additional resources for students who require extra assistance to ensure their success. Implement differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning needs.

Interest:

- Incorporate multimedia, interactive content, and gamified activities into English lessons to increase student engagement and motivation.

- Introduce culturally authentic materials, such as videos, songs, and literature, that align with students' interests and promote cultural understanding.

Caring:

- Foster a collaborative, supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and respected. Encourage peer collaboration, group discussions, and constructive feedback.
- Create opportunities for teacher-student interactions, such as virtual office hours, to address individual student needs and provide personalized guidance and encouragement.
- Pay attention to students' learning dynamics, reduce their anxiety caused by their unadaptation to MIT-based English teaching, and help them gradually become strategic learners with active learning motivation in the learning process.

2.5 Action Implementation

Next, two lesson plans (instructional design) are provided to demonstrate how the integration of MUSIC model and blended teaching is implemented in the EFL class.

Table 1. Lesson Plan (Sample 1)

Content	Unit 3 Leadership and the Art of Struggle
Objectives	Language/Knowledge objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students will be able to express themselves more freely on leadership and describe the necessary qualities of a leader. ■ Students will be able to practice vocabulary and structures related to leadership and its use in context.
	Motivational objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ By completing the unit, Ss will realize various opportunities for leadership in college and may discover their leadership potential, thus motivating them to actively participate in extracurricular activities to exercise their leadership skills. ■ Engaging Ss in the reading task and vocabulary learning through various games so that they will feel interested in the coursework.
	<p>Activity 1</p> <p>Before class:</p> <p>Preview the following learning resources online via XuexiTong (a versatile online learning platform, allowing students to access educational content anytime and anywhere, combining educational resources, interactive features, and personalized learning support.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the cultural background information of this unit: commencement address; taboo; the Struggle Lens View 2. Watch the video about Qin Yuefei's leadership story, then get prepared for a debate in class. <p>In class:</p> <p>Step 1. Have a vote on whether leadership is innate or developed on XUEXITONG, then ask what makes them think so.</p> <p>Step 2. Based on Qin Yuefei's leadership story and discuss the questions: What makes QIN a leader? Do you think he will be a good leader in the future? Can a college student become a leader?</p> <p>Step 3. Read the articles <i>opportunities for leadership in college</i> and discuss: How do</p>

Instructional design	<p>develop leadership skills in college? Students discuss their roles in campus organization and activities based on their own experiences, then instructor guides them to think about how to train leadership in daily learning, daily life, and extracurricular activities, with the aim of changing students' stereotypical impressions of the term 'leadership'.</p> <p>Step 4. Making a candidate speech. You are planning to run for the directorship of the English Association of your university. As part of the selection process, all candidates are required to make a candidate speech.</p> <p>Activity 2</p> <p>Before class:</p> <p>Learn new words of unit 3 online via XuexiTong and get prepared for a vocabulary competition and story telling next class.</p> <p>In class:</p> <p>Game1: Match the sentences with the pictures.</p> <p>Firstly, The instructor demonstrates 10 pictures on the screen. Then he reads 10 sentences one by one, each of which contains a new word from the word list. After hearing each sentence, Students are supposed to match the sentence with the picture it describes. The one who answers correctly first will receive bonus points.</p> <p>Game 2 : Round-robin story.</p> <p>Step 1: Form a group of three to four classmates;</p> <p>Step 2: Activate the story context (the story is based on "Rip out the page!" from the movie titled <i>Dead Poets Society</i>);</p> <p>Step 3: Story Continuation in A-B-C-D-A-B-C-D order, with each person having three to four sentences. During the process, try to use as many vocabulary as possible from the unit word list;</p> <p>Step 4: Summarize, clarify ideas, and present a complete story.</p> <p>Step 5: Vote to select the 'Best Plot Award, 'Best Creativity Award'.</p>
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Table 2. Lesson Plan (Sample 2)

Content	Unit 6 Life As You See It
Objectives	Language/Knowledge objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understand common depression problems and stereotypes. ■ Express more freely on how to battle against depression. ■ Grasp the reading skill of identifying problems and solutions.
	Motivational objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Students will benefit from the coursework in the class. ■ Engaging Ss in the vocabulary learning through games and movie clip watching so

	<p>that they will feel interested in the coursework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Let students feel cared by the instructor who cares about how well they do in the assignment and activities through objective and timely feedback. 				
<p>Instructional design</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; padding: 5px;">Period 1 Language objectives</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand common depression problems and stereotypes. 2. Express more freely on battling depression. </td> </tr> </table> <p>Motivational objectives:</p> <p><i>Students will benefit from the coursework and knowledge in the class</i></p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>Step 1: Before class, students are supposed to watch a video titled <i>WHAT IS DEPRESSION</i> first, and then finish two related tasks on XXT (Purpose: to get a general picture of their previous opinions and attitude about depression)</p> <p><i>Task 1: Depression Diagnosis—SDS Survey (see XXT 5.1)</i></p> <p><i>Task 2: (multiple choice) What would you do if you suffered from DP(see XXT 5.1)</i></p> <p>Step 2: In class, Students will watch a TED talk about stereotypes of depression (uploaded on XXT5.6). Then let students work in groups to discuss what is wrong about these stereotypes, then each group draw a mind map to show their new understanding of depression. (Purpose: to guide Ss to think rationally and properly about depression, and ready to help people those are depressed)</p> <p><i>Critical Thinking: How to change society's perception of depression as a stigma?</i></p> <p>Step 3: Watch a video(uploaded on XXT5.6) about how a college student called Jack Park overcame his depression, then discuss what people can do to battle against depression.</p> <p>Step 4: Read an article about a surge of depression during COVID-19 and answer the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Where does the distress in the pandemic probably stem from?</i> 2. <i>Who are more vulnerable to depression amid the COVID-19? And why?</i> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; padding: 5px;">Period 2 Language objectives</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Practice vocabulary related to battling depression and its use in context.</td> </tr> </table>	Period 1 Language objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand common depression problems and stereotypes. 2. Express more freely on battling depression. 	Period 2 Language objectives	Practice vocabulary related to battling depression and its use in context.
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<p>Instructional design</p>	<p>Motivational objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Engaging Ss in the vocabulary learning through games and movie clip watching so</i> 				

that they will feel interested in the coursework

Procedure:

Step 1: Before class, students are supposed to preview word study of Unit 6 by watching the micro lecture uploaded on XXT(5.3 Vocabulary) to get some basic information about word formation and usage of some core words related to depression.

Step 2: In-class activities.

Activity 1: Listen&Match. Match the sentences with the pictures.

Activity 2: Movie dubbing competition. (XXT)

Activity 3: Writing Assignment

Because of ongoing stigma and misconceptions about mental illness, many people are reluctant to seek help from a psychiatrist. How can you help your friend or relative reach out for professional treatment if they are depressed? Write a short essay and submit it to iWrite (a writing assistance tool designed to help individuals improve their writing skills).

Motivational objectives:

Period 3-4 Language objectives	1. Grasp and apply the reading skill of identifying problems and solutions. 2. To explain key words and expressions and analyze difficult sentences to help students better understand the text
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- The instructor will be willing to assist the students if they need help in the course.
- Students will be interested in the coursework because of the activity involved.

Motivational objectives:

- To engage students during the process of text analysis through mixed-readiness groups.
- The instructor will be willing to assist the students if they need help in the course.
- Students will be interested in the coursework because of the activity involved: Academic reading circle.

Part 1: Reading skill of identifying problems and solutions

Step 1: Before class, students are supposed to watch the micro lecture about this reading skill uploaded on XXT(5.4 Reading Skill Focus) to get a general idea of P-S essay, such as its definition, purpose, elements, and some useful tips

Step 2: In class application

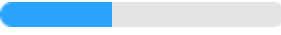
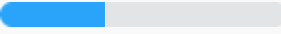
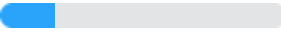
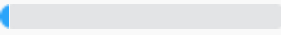
<p><i>Task 1: Watch a movie clip from “ The Lion King” (See the movie clip on XXT 5.4) and identify the four elements of P-S pattern: situation, problem, response, result.</i></p> <p><i>Task 2: Skim&Scan. Read three passages, then apply the reading skill you learned and identify problems and solutions in each passage.</i></p> <p>Part 2: Text analysis</p> <p>Strategies: small groups of mixed-readiness, peer tutoring</p> <p>Process:</p> <p>Step 1: Students read Text A before class and fill out the prereading list (reading comprehension and difficult language points).</p> <p>Step 2: Students are divided into 6 groups, each group consists of two high proficiency level students. Then divide Text A evenly into three parts, each group self-select one part to analyze (or decided by random draw to make sure each part is analyzed by two groups.)</p> <p>Step 3: Each group studies the part they choose thoroughly within the given time. Allow each group member to choose their role based on their strength (vocabulary, grammar, timekeeper, organization, cultural collector, note taker, etc. Please refer to Academic reading circle). Find the key or difficult language points and solve them within the group.</p> <p>【Reminder: group members should learn from each other modestly and those who have a high English proficiency level should help those low level.】</p> <p>Step 4: Find the key or difficult language points in other parts and question other groups.</p>

2.6 Data Gathering after Action.

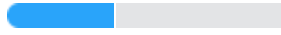
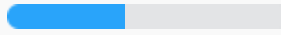

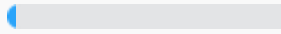
After the implementation of the integration of MUSIC model and blended teaching in the EFL class, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire to measure and determine the effects of the action and to feed the results back to the students. The result is presented in the next session.

III. RESULT

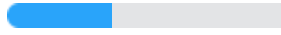
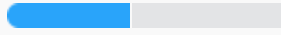
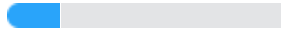
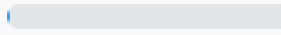
3.1. Is it convenient to operate when using the mobile learning platform of XueXitong for English learning?

option	subtotal	scale
A. Very convenient	83	 39.71%
B. Relatively convenient	78	 37.32%
C. Relatively cumbersome	41	 19.62%
D. Very cumbersome	7	 3.35%
Valid response	209	

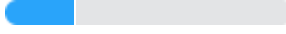
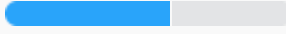
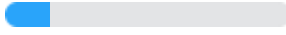
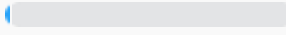
3.2. Are you satisfied with the design of online teaching which is supposed to help you clearly understand your learning tasks?

option	subtotal	scale
A. Very satisfied	79	 37.8%
B. Somewhat satisfied	88	 42.11%
C. Neutral	35	 16.75%
Dissatisfied	7	 3.35%
Valid response	209	

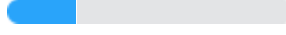

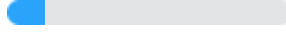
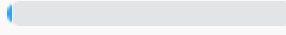
3.3. Are the online learning resources abundant enough to enrich your English learning?

option	subtotal	scale
A. Very abundant	78	 37.32%
B. Relatively abundant	90	 43.06%
Average	39	 18.66%
D. Not abundant	2	 0.96%
Valid response	209	

3.4. Since the launch of the online and offline blended teaching of Integrated English course , your motivation for English learning _____.


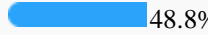

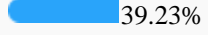
option	subtotal	scale
A. Significant improvement	51	 24.4%
B. Some improvement	121	 57.89%
C. No improvement	33	 15.79%
D. Some decline	4	 1.91%
Valid response	209	

3.5. Is there any improvement of your English learning efficiency after the implementation of MUSIC model and blended teaching?

option	subtotal	scale
A. Significant improvement	51	 24.4%
B. Some improvement	127	 60.77%
C. No improvement	28	 13.4%
D. Some decline	3	 1.44%
Valid response	209	

3.6 Compared to traditional classroom teaching, what changes (or gains) do you think the implementation of online and offline blended English teaching mode has brought to you this semester? (open-ended question)

_____.

option	subtotal	scale
A. Teachers empower students to some extent, that is, students can control their own online and offline learning to a certain extent and complete course assignments or tasks in their own way. The learning method is also more flexible.	145	 69.38%
B. The usefulness of the integrated English course has been improved.	102	 48.8%
C. Through various language or theme-based tasks, the students are engaged in language application activities such as presentation, discussion, language games, group report.	118	 56.46%
D. In blended learning of college English, students become active constructors of knowledge, enhancing their English proficiency through practices such as	82	 39.23%

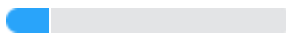
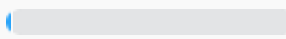
online learning, discussion, and team collaboration, thereby improving their practical application of the English language.		
E. Blended teaching is more helpful to improve my confidence and self-efficacy in English learning.	60	28.71%
F. Active participation	90	43.06%
G. More interesting and engaging	62	29.67%
H. Students' performance and display time is increased	42	20.1%
I. Blended teaching places more emphasis on process evaluation, urging students to focus on their daily work and the learning process.	59	28.23%
J. Teacher conducts personalized analysis by detecting and tracking students' learning processes, providing personalized resources and assistance.	62	29.67%

3.7. What difficulties or challenges did you encounter in the online and offline learning of the integrated English course? (open-ended question) _____

option	total	subt	scale
A. Lack of autonomous learning ability		121	57.89%
B. Learning materials are not abundant enough		18	8.61%
C. Insufficient collaborative communication skills.		68	32.54%
D. Limited language proficiency and application skills.		95	45.45%
E. The learning app does not run smoothly.		42	20.1%
F. The learning tasks are overwhelming.		68	32.54%
G.others		5	2.39%
Valid response		209	

3.8. In general, are you satisfied with the MUSIC-basedblended English teaching model in this semester?

option	subtotal	scale
A. Very satisfied	56	26.79%
B. Somewhat satisfied	119	56.94%

C. Neutral	31	 14.83%
Dissatisfied	3	 1.44%

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the era of informatization provides convenience and opportunities for college students' English learning, but at the same time, it brings challenges in self-management and learning quality control. By incorporating the motivational strategies, the blended learning approach in college English teaching can seamlessly integrate MUSIC motivational elements. This approach will enhance students' motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes in English language acquisition. College students should actively utilize learning resources and tools in the era of informatization to enhance their learning motivation and strengthen self-management abilities to cope with challenges. Meanwhile, educators and schools can provide support and guidance, create a positive learning atmosphere, and promote the improvement of college students' motivation in English learning.

This action research is not without limitations. The following issues could potentially be addressed by future research. The first issue is the transition from online learning to offline learning. During the implementation stage, some students mentioned that the biggest change was the autonomy in learning. Blended English teaching model should pay attention to the distribution of workload, with online and offline tasks complementing each other instead of burdening each other, and tasks could be assigned step by step. Therefore, in future research, it is important to focus on the effective integration of online and offline components in blended teaching. Regarding teaching content, it is important to differentiate the difficulty levels between online and offline learning materials and ensure a reasonable allocation of workload. In terms of teaching processes, it is necessary to enhance online interactions with students and ensure the alignment of online and offline activities. The second issue is the integration of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. After the action research, it is found that some students still have strong instrumental motivation in English learning. In future research, it is recommended to align English learning activities with real-world applications and career relevance. Instructors can integrate authentic materials and tasks that simulate real-life situations, such as role-playing exercises or case studies to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation to solve problems by increasing the feasibility and authenticity of English learning content. In this way, the unity of instrumental and humanistic aspects of college English can be better achieved.

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