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The Implementation of English as a Foreign Language and the Effective Behavior of Teachers in Chinese Private Colleges under the Background of Blended Learning

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Abstract
In the information age, traditional teaching methods are replaced by blended learning, which integrates online and offline instruction. This approach has gained prominence, particularly in higher education, and is being explored for English as a Foreign Language in Chinese private colleges. This study examines the implementation and effectiveness of blended learning for English as a Foreign Language in Chinese private colleges. Through surveys of five English as a Foreign Language teachers, the research reveals that while blended learning is widely adopted, the proportion of online to offline components varies, influenced by teachers' perceptions, resource limitations, and institutional training. Student evaluations through the questionnaire show strong acceptance, with students appreciating the interactive and engaging nature of blended learning. The findings suggest that improving teacher training and continuously updating resources could further enhance the effectiveness of blended learning, ultimately helping to bridge the gap between assigned and actual online learning while significantly improving English proficiency. The study underscores the importance of blended learning in modern EFL education and offers strategic recommendations for optimizing its impact in Chinese private colleges.

Keywords: blended learning, Chinese private college, effective teaching behavior, English as a foreign language, higher education

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Introduction

In recent decades, technology has seen significant advancements and growth, particularly with the advent of the Internet (Mustafa et al., 2019). The current fundamental shift, in which technology is seen as a dynamic and interconnected environment that promotes digital learning, is linked to institutions embracing technological advancements (Mahlow & Hediger, 2019). Today, rapid advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) impact all areas, including education, where they bring about significant changes. Educators are gradually replacing the traditional method of using blackboards and spoken instructions in classrooms (Jong & Tan, 2021). As a result of these evolving approaches, terms like online learning, e-learning, multi-learning, and blended learning have emerged (Eryilmaz, 2015). Blended learning, which aims to integrate the advantages of online education with traditional face-to-face teaching methods, considers both information transmission and interaction (Finn & Bucceri, 2004).

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, UNESCO reported that educational institutions in over 186 countries were closed, forcing about 73.8% of active learners worldwide, including those in China, to promptly transition to alternative learning methods. To ensure uninterrupted learning during the pandemic lockdown, China implemented the Suspending Classes Without Stopping Learning policy (Zhang et al., 2020). However, due to the sudden onset of the pandemic, many institutions, especially private colleges in China, were not fully prepared regarding students' academic levels, the number of teachers, and social support. The pandemic disrupted the regular studies and daily lives of college students (Jiang, 2023). As the most prominent English education market globally, any changes in China's English education policy significantly impact millions, including EFL students, lecturers, university administrators, and other stakeholders (Cheng & Wei, 2021). Since blended learning is still in its early stages in China, both students and teachers, especially in private colleges, have faced numerous challenges in adapting to this approach.

Numerous universities and colleges in China have conducted various e-learning experiments, but these have yet to achieve the expected outcomes (Huang & Zhou, 2006). Blended learning, which integrates face-to-face and online instruction, has become highly prevalent and dominant in higher education across numerous countries (Gaol & Hutagalung, 2020). Moreover, blended learning has gained greater acceptance among teaching staff (Atwa et al., 2022). It also aligns with the principles of effective teaching and learning, making it well-suited to China's national context and important for advancing educational informatization and reform (Nan, 2010). In recent years, China has consistently promoted educational informatization. As a new learning model that combines the benefits of traditional face-to-face and online learning, blended learning has been implemented across various educational stages, playing a crucial role in addressing the shortcomings of conventional teaching methods and enhancing teaching quality. Educational institutions recognize blended learning as the most efficient and widely adopted instructional method, mainly due to its ability to offer flexible, timely, and continuous learning opportunities (Rasheed et al., 2020). However, blended learning still has many implementation challenges, especially in China. Blended learning in China is still developing, and both students and teachers, especially in private colleges, are struggling to adapt. Compared to public college students, those in private colleges exhibit poorer self-discipline and are easily distracted, making this guidance from teachers more crucial (Yang & Qiu, 2017). Yuan (2020) highlighted that the effectiveness of college English blended learning in private colleges is limited by outdated teaching concepts, a lack of diverse methods, and insufficient support from schools and society. Consequently, in

Chinese private colleges, teachers' instructional practices directly impact the implementation of blended learning.

Building on this research background, the study examines the implementation of blended learning in English courses at private colleges in China. It identifies effective teaching practices and proposes strategies for enhancing these methods. The research questions are as follows: (RQ1) What is the current implementation of blended learning among private college EFL teachers in China？(RQ2) What are the effective teaching behaviors of EFL teachers in blended learning in private colleges in China？(RQ3) How can effective teaching behaviors be achieved based on the analysis?

By addressing these issues, this study holds significant value as it responds to the growing demand for improving English language instruction in Chinese private colleges through blended learning. By critically examining how blended learning is implemented in English courses, the research provides essential insights into effective pedagogical practices and the factors shaping them. The findings offer practical guidance for educators and institutions aiming to optimize blended learning models to enhance students' English proficiency.

Literature Review

Blended learning was first introduced in the late 1990s when universities in the United States and Canada pioneered a hybrid approach that combined face-to-face instruction with online learning methods (Ghazali et al., 2018). In 2003, He Kekang first proposed the concept of blended learning in China at the 7th Global Chinese Conference on Computers in Education. He highlighted that blended learning is a method that seamlessly integrates the benefits of online learning with face-to-face instruction (Xu, 2019).

Blended learning has become more prevalent and extensively applied in higher education in the 21st century (Mozelius & Rydell, 2017). Nevertheless, the definition of blended learning remains somewhat ambiguous due to the lack of a universally accepted standard (Moskal, et al., 2013; Radia, 2019). A thorough review of the literature on blended learning research identifies three main areas of focus: the blended mode of instruction, the importance of integrating technology in education, and the crucial role of student factors in achieving effective blended learning. Researchers have extensively explored the combination of face-to-face and online learning, some focusing on the mode of blended learning and its benefits (Dakh & Irfan, 2020; Jalinus, 2021). Dakh and Irfan (2020) held that blended learning involves integrating technology with education using the blended learning model. This mode merges traditional classroom instruction with online teaching. Its main advantage is that it enhances student interaction at any time and place. Jalinus (2021) analyzed various blended learning models in vocational education. Using questionnaires, observation sheets, and cognitive, affective, and psychomotor tests, Jalinus identified the mode, theory, and component of blended learning. These studies analyze the different models of blended learning and their respective advantages and disadvantages to determine the optimal model for various scenarios.

Some research has shown that technology plays a crucial role in implementing a blended learning environment (Trigwell, 2013; Khechine, 2014; Powell, 2015; Anthony, 2022). Powell (2015) suggested that blended learning is an efficient model integrating various advanced educational technologies. Trigwell (2013) concluded that blended learning encompasses a range of learning theories, diverse teaching methods, different types of learners, learning environments, and advanced educational technologies. Some researchers, like Khechine (2014) and Anthony

(2022), adopted a technological perspective with theoretical foundations rooted in technology-related domains, like the UTAUT theory (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology).

Additionally, the literature recognizes the essential influence of student factors, including motivation, self-regulation, and learning preferences, in determining the success and outcomes of blended learning initiatives (Bersin, 2016; Fadhilatunisa, 2020; Suryono et al., 2023). Bersin (2016) emphasized that the learning experience of students is vital in blended learning, which involves supporting diverse learning styles and strategies beneficial to both teachers and students. Fadhilatunisa (2020) explored the impact of a blended learning approach on enhancing students' critical thinking abilities and their drive to learn. Suryono et al. (2013) investigated students' critical thinking skills. They conducted a meta-analysis to highlight the significant impact of blended learning on students.

By examining these critical dimensions, existing research offers valuable insights into the complex nature of blended learning and its implications for educational practices. It is evident that research on the effectiveness of English teachers' instructional behaviors has been relatively abundant, and studies on blended learning in the context of English as a Foreign Language are also increasing annually. Numerous studies like those of Hoxie (2013), Zhang and Zhu (2018), Akbarov et al. (2018), Rasheed et al. (2020), Fatkhulloh (2020), Dakhi et al. (2020), and Arisanto et al. (2023) have focused on students learning English as a Foreign Language, with blended learning being a central theme. However, only a few studies like those of Karavas (2014), Manwaring et al. (2017), Krasnova and Shurygin (2020), and Heilporn et al. (2021) have investigated the implementation and effectiveness of blended learning in the ESL/EFL context. There is only a limited number of studies that have explored blended learning from the perspective of instructors (Anthony, 2022).

Furthermore, previous research indicates that lecturers' teaching methods are influenced by their teaching beliefs. Additionally, research is scarce on the effective teaching of EFL teachers in the context of blended learning within private colleges in China. In China, teachers are still in the exploratory stage of developing blended learning capabilities and are not yet prepared for comprehensive blended learning reform (Feng et al., 2021). Most studies were conducted in public universities. For instance, Wang et al. (2021) investigated blended learning in Chinese public universities, focusing primarily on the learning environment and learner perceptions. Similarly, Zheng et al. (2021) researched blended learning in physical education at public universities, emphasizing the importance of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, students in private colleges often exhibit poor self-discipline and are easily distracted, making the role of teacher guidance more significant.

Method

The research adopts a triangulation mixed methods approach. The results from both qualitative and quantitative analyses address the research questions and objectives. The implementation of blended learning in private colleges in China was culled in Guizhou Province using an open-ended question survey. This region represents a middle level of EFL proficiency in China. Data from the open-ended question survey were analyzed using Nvivo to answer RQ1, and the student questionnaire was processed using SPSS to address RQ2. Based on the results of both analyses, RQ3 will be addressed.

Participants

The study was conducted at a private college in China, focusing on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. Five EFL teachers from this college were selected using purposeful sampling based on gender, age, and teaching experience. This selection ensured diversity among the participants while representing different teaching backgrounds within the same institution. Additionally, the study involved freshmen and sophomore students enrolled in the classes taught by these five teachers. A total of 350 students participated, all studying EFL in a blended learning environment. The setting for the study was within the regular classroom environment of this private college, where blended learning methods were integrated into English instruction.

Research Instruments

Open-ended question survey

This study investigates the current application of blended learning and effective teaching practices in Chinese private colleges, in alignment with the research objectives and questions. To collect pertinent data, selected teachers were given a survey with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions serve to investigate, clarify, or confirm established concepts (Jackson & Trochim, 2002). Furthermore, compared to interviews or focus groups, surveys featuring open-ended questions provide respondents with greater anonymity, often resulting in more honest and forthright answers (Erickson & Kaplan, 2000).

To assess the current implementation of blended learning, this research utilized an open-ended question survey adapted from Neumeier's (2005) framework. Neumeier established parameters for describing and conceptualizing a blended learning environment for language learning and teaching. Consequently, this survey for teachers adheres to six parameters: a. choice of modes, b. distribution of modes, c. distribution of learning content and objectives and purpose assignment, d. language teaching methods, e. involvement of learning subjects (students, teachers, and computers), and f. location.

The collected data will undergo descriptive content analysis using NVivo, aiding in addressing RQ1 and achieving RQ1.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire given to students aims to gather their perspectives and practices concerning effective teaching behaviors in the context of blended learning evaluation. Its goal is to identify which teaching behaviors are most effective and beneficial for students. This student questionnaire is adapted from Marsh's (1982) SEEQ.

The SEEQ (Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality) questionnaire, developed by Marsh (1982), is a well-regarded tool for assessing teaching effectiveness. It consists of 33 items that assess nine general factors: learning/value, instructor enthusiasm, organization/clarity, group interaction, individual rapport, breadth of coverage, examinations/grading, assignments/reading, and workload/difficulty (Marsh, 1982). Recognized by researchers as the standard for student evaluations in higher education (Coffey & Gibbs, 2001), the SEEQ questionnaire enables an in-depth examination of students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness, mainly focusing on student engagement and feedback in the classroom.

Before conducting the study, the researcher translated the SEEQ questionnaire into Mandarin. A bilingual academic with extensive experience in the field then re-translated the instrument back into English. The bilingual academic and the researchers compared the original and back-translated versions, making necessary adjustments to ensure the accuracy of the Chinese

version. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to evaluate the construct validity and internal reliability of the study, which is a prerequisite for subsequent factor analysis.

Research Procedures

Data collection

The data collection was divided into two phases. For the qualitative data collection to investigate the implementation of blended learning of EFL in private colleges in China, five teachers were invited to answer the open-ended questions via a widely and commonly used investigation tool in China called *Wenjuanxin*g. For the quantitative part, 350 questionnaires were distributed to students who attended EFL classes of the five teachers mentioned above. This process also used *Wenjuanxing* to collect the data.

Data analysis

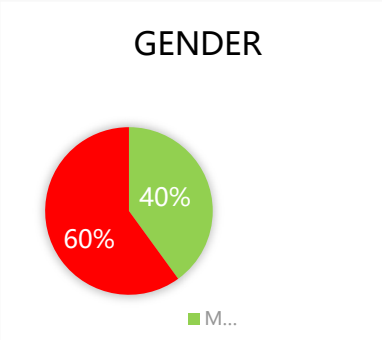
Using the research instruments mentioned above, and employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the results are presented in alignment with the research questions and objectives. Qualitative analysis was conducted using NVivo 12.0 software. An open-ended question online survey was administered to five teachers at one private college in Guiyang. The collected data were coded and categorized within a project document under a specific node. The qualitative analysis began with open coding after importing the transcripts.

Results

Descriptive Information of the Participants

To find the current implementation of blended learning among private college EFL teachers in China, the initial research objective is to investigate the current adoption of blended learning among private college EFL teachers in China. This objective is achieved by conducting an online survey with five teachers.

Demographic statistics of the five teachers revealed two male and three female teachers. Their ages ranged as follows: one teacher aged 18-34, three teachers aged 35-50, and one teacher over 50. As age increased, so did the teaching experience and years. One teacher had less than ten years of teaching experience. Among the teachers aged 35-50, all had over ten years but less than twenty years of teaching experience. The teacher, over 50 years old, had more than twenty years of teaching experience. Some detailed information on participants is shown in Figure One and Figure Two.



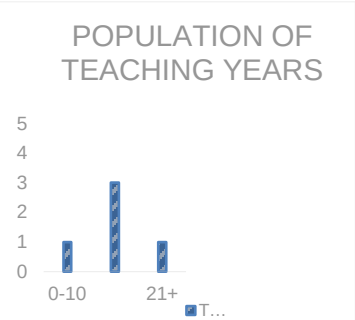


Figure 1. Gender distribution *Figure 2.* Teaching years distribution

The descriptive information of the participants by using open coding analysis of the online survey is as follows:

i. Current Implementation of Blended Learning: All five teachers answered "yes" to whether they are implementing blended learning.

ii. Percentage of Online and Offline Periods: A younger and less experienced teacher reported that the online and offline periods each account for 50 percent. One indicated that the percentage of online and offline periods was roughly a 60-40 split. The other three teachers reported a 30% online and 70% offline distribution.

iii. Relationship Between Online and Offline Learning: Upon repeated reading of the feedback, it was found that two teachers mentioned that online learning extends offline learning, with the online content having little to no impact on the difficulty of offline learning, serving mainly to broaden perspectives and supplement interests. Three teachers, however, indicated that the relationship is significant, with the quality of online learning directly affecting the progress of offline learning and vice versa. They viewed the online and offline learning content as complementary. Further analysis showed that the former two teachers regarded the relationship as less connected or independent, while the latter three viewed it as highly interconnected.

iv. Techniques, Tools, or Apps Used in Blended Learning: All five teachers used WeChat for task distribution and answering questions, and three used DingTalk for online queries. Both are instant messaging tools without educational content. Four teachers used the iSmart app, which is associated with English textbooks and includes vocabulary, grammar, exercises, and supplementary materials. Three teachers also used Cloud Class or MOOCs for extracurricular videos to enhance learning interest. One teacher used PiGaiWang to support offline teaching. The tools used in blended learning can be categorized into instant communication tools for interaction and supplementary applications for content extension.

v. Roles of Teachers and Students in Blended Learning Mode: Two teachers responded that in online learning, students are the main actors, while in offline learning, teachers take the lead. The other three teachers stated that the roles depend on various situations and activities, with teachers providing guidance and students being responsible for their learning, especially in group work and discussions. Open coding revealed that teachers consider the primary classroom role based on teaching content and students' learning levels. These can be coded as primary codes, influencing factors as secondary codes and student-led and teacher-led factors as tertiary codes.

vi. Place to Conduct Blended Learning: All five teachers stated offline learning occurs in classrooms. Three teachers mentioned that online learning occurs over the Internet, with students in dormitories and teachers at home or offices. Two teachers indicated that online learning happens via software-based courses, with students completing online learning at their convenience.

vii. Training or Professional Development Opportunities Related to Blended Teaching: Four teachers reported receiving some training, primarily theoretical and not applicable to their practice. One teacher reported no training. Four teachers also felt that training related to blended learning needs timely updates, as many training materials and software are outdated. The repeated mentions of "insufficient training," "outdated training content," and "lack of resources" were categorized as primary codes. Platform factors and teacher training levels were classified as secondary codes, while factors affecting the implementation of blended learning were considered tertiary codes.

viii. Resources and Tools to Enhance Blended Learning Effectiveness: Three teachers suggested increasing online learning platforms, as current platforms are limited and outdated. Additionally, three teachers emphasized the need for more training in blended learning, as teachers

have limited access to blended learning methods, and the mode lacks diversity, limiting its potential benefits. Two teachers noted that English learning, unlike other subjects, requires substantial practice in conversation and speaking, which online learning can support by providing training opportunities.

iv. Advantages and Disadvantages of Blended Teaching Compared to Traditional Face-to-Face Teaching: The five teachers had varying opinions: two teachers felt that blended learning enriches teaching methods, enhancing student interest and motivation. Three teachers believed that blended learning compensates for the shortcomings of traditional face-to-face teaching by providing valuable materials for understanding culture, conducting oral dialogues in context, and supplementing classroom time.

v. Additional Suggestions for Learning College English in a Blended Environment: repeated readings of the teachers' responses identified "increasing learning platforms", "conducting teacher training", and "diversifying online learning content" as primary codes, with "teacher factors", "platform factors", and "course factors" as secondary codes. Factors influencing the effective implementation of blended learning were identified as tertiary codes.

The Reliability and Validity of the SEEQ

Effective teaching behavior within the context of blended learning in private colleges in China was explored using SPSS 29.0. Before starting the data analysis, the data were checked for reliability. Cronbach's alpha is used to assess the reliability of a questionnaire. It offers a straightforward method to determine if a score is reliable. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient ranges between 0 and 1. Generally, the higher the coefficient value, the more reliable the data is. By analyzing the data using SPSS software, a reliability coefficient of .966 was obtained, indicating that the reliability is high and suitable for conducting data analysis. The reliability statistics are shown in Table One.

Table 1. *Reliability statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.966	.966	33

To assess validity, the KMO and Bartlett's sphericity tests were conducted on all the data from the SEEQ scale, which measures effective teaching behaviors. According to Shrestha (2021), the KMO value ranges from 0 to 1. A KMO value between 0.8 and 1.0 suggests that the sampling is adequate. Values from 0.7 to 0.79 are considered middling, while values from 0.6 to 0.69 are deemed mediocre. If the KMO value is below 0.6, the sampling is inadequate, and corrective measures should be taken. As shown in Figure three, the KMO value of the SEEQ scale is .961, indicating that it is very suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett's sphere test also reached a significant level ($p < 0.05$), indicating the existence of a factor structure, which is adequate for further factor analysis.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.961
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10314.014
	df	528
	Sig.	<.001

Figure 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Additionally, due to the exploratory nature of factor analysis, it does not differentiate between independent and dependent variables. Factor analysis clusters variables that exhibit similarity into a common factor, aiming to uncover the underlying variables, relying solely on the correlation matrix of the data.

In this research, factor analysis with principal components extraction was employed to assess if the statements correspond to discernible factors associated with teaching behaviors. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) refers to the statistical method applied to identify the principal components of the data, which are calculated to highlight significant patterns within the dataset(Hair et al., 2006).

Principal Component Analysis was used for factor extraction, selecting factors with an eigenvalue more significant than one during the extraction process; the factor rotation method chosen was Varimax, which arranges the items according to the size of the factor loadings and only outputs items with loadings above 0.3. A total of 5 factors were extracted, with a cumulative variance explained of 71.66%, which is shown in Figure four.

Factor five only contains one item, as shown in Figure four. Therefore, it is more appropriate to remove this factor. However, doing so may alter the factor structure, necessitating a re-analysis of the factors. Since removing an item might change the reliability, a reliability test needs to be conducted. The test results are shown in Table two. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is .968, as shown in Table two. It is higher than the reliability coefficient for the 33 items, indicating that it is more suitable for data analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	17.210	52.153	52.153	17.210	52.153	52.153
2	2.242	6.793	58.945	2.242	6.793	58.945
3	1.821	5.518	64.463	1.821	5.518	64.463
4	1.331	4.033	68.496	1.331	4.033	68.496
5	1.045	3.168	71.664	1.045	3.168	71.664
6	.964	2.920	74.584			
7	.830	2.514	77.099			
8	.666	2.017	79.116			
9	.604	1.829	80.945			
10	.546	1.654	82.598			
11	.505	1.530	84.129			
12	.427	1.295	85.424			
13	.391	1.184	86.608			
14	.371	1.123	87.731			
15	.358	1.084	88.816			
16	.343	1.041	89.856			
17	.301	.911	90.767			
18	.290	.878	91.646			
19	.271	.822	92.467			
20	.257	.778	93.245			
21	.239	.723	93.968			
22	.223	.676	94.644			
23	.215	.652	95.296			
24	.206	.623	95.920			
25	.193	.584	96.504			
26	.185	.561	97.065			
27	.169	.511	97.576			
28	.165	.501	98.077			
29	.140	.426	98.502			
30	.136	.413	98.915			
31	.134	.406	99.321			
32	.124	.374	99.695			
33	.101	.305	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure 4. Total variance explained

Table 2. *Reliability statistics after modification*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.968	.969	32

After removing item 33, a second-factor analysis was conducted using the same steps and settings as the first analysis. First, the KMO and Bartlett's spherical tests were performed. As shown in Figure Five, the KMO value for this factor analysis is .961, and Bartlett's spherical test reached a significant level ($p < 0.05$), indicating that it is suitable for factor analysis. The second-factor analysis extracted four factors, explaining 70.465% of the cumulative variance, as shown in Figure Six.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.961
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10287.814
	df	496
	Sig.	<.001

Figure 5. KMO and Barlett's Test after modification

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	17.206	53.770	53.770	17.206	53.770	53.770	11.188	34.962	34.962
2	2.208	6.900	60.670	2.208	6.900	60.670	5.371	16.785	51.747
3	1.816	5.674	66.344	1.816	5.674	66.344	3.696	11.549	63.296
4	1.319	4.122	70.465	1.319	4.122	70.465	2.294	7.169	70.465
5	.964	3.012	73.478						
6	.857	2.677	76.154						
7	.686	2.144	78.298						
8	.632	1.974	80.273						
9	.551	1.723	81.996						
10	.508	1.589	83.584						
11	.428	1.338	84.922						
12	.392	1.225	86.147						
13	.373	1.166	87.313						
14	.360	1.126	88.438						
15	.343	1.073	89.512						
16	.301	.940	90.452						
17	.292	.912	91.363						
18	.271	.848	92.211						
19	.258	.807	93.018						
20	.239	.748	93.766						
21	.224	.699	94.465						
22	.216	.674	95.140						
23	.208	.649	95.789						
24	.193	.602	96.391						
25	.185	.578	96.969						
26	.169	.530	97.499						
27	.165	.516	98.016						
28	.141	.439	98.455						
29	.136	.426	98.880						
30	.134	.419	99.299						
31	.124	.386	99.685						
32	.101	.315	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Figure 6. Total variance explained after modification

Based on the results of the rotated component matrix and the dimensional framework proposed by the SEEQ questionnaire, the four factors of effective teaching behaviors in English blended learning are named as shown in Figure Seven.

FACTOR	ITEM	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FACTOR1 LEARNING AND VALUE	3. My interest in the subject has increased as a consequence of this course.	1	5	4.1	0.836
	4. I have learned and understood the subject materials of this course.	1	5	4.04	0.844
	1. I have found the course intellectually challenging and stimulating.	1	5	4.03	0.93
	2. I have learned something which I consider valuable.	1	5	4.02	0.889
FACTOR2 STYLE AND ENTHUSIASM	6. Instructor was dynamic and energetic in conducting the course.	1	5	4.29	0.81
	7. Instructor enhanced presentations with the use of humor.	1	5	4.26	0.808
	5. Instructor was enthusiastic about teaching the course.	1	5	4.24	0.854
	10. Instructor's materials were well prepared and carefully explained.	2	5	4.22	0.804
	8. Instructor's style of presentation held my interest during class.	1	5	4.18	0.856
	9. Instructor's explanations were clear.	2	5	4.18	0.791
FACTOR3 MANAGEMENT AND AND INTERACTION	17. Instructor was friendly towards individual students.	1	5	4.27	0.87
	13. Students were encouraged to participate in class discussions.	1	5	4.26	0.818
	18. Instructor made students feel welcome in seeking help/ advice in or outside of class.	1	5	4.23	0.854
	15. Students were encouraged to ask questions and were given meaningful answers.	1	5	4.2	0.848
	16. Students were encouraged to express their own ideas and/or question the instructor.	1	5	4.18	0.8
	14. Students were invited to share their ideas and knowledge.	1	5	4.17	0.847
	27. Examinations/graded materials tested course content as emphasized by the instructor.	1	5	4.16	0.811
FACTOR4 CHARACTERISTIC AND CURRICULUM	30. Class difficulty, relative to other classes, was:	1	5	3.61	0.912
	32. Class pace was:	1	5	3.4	0.761
	31. Class workload, relative to other classes, was:	1	5	3.39	0.853

Figure 7. SEEQ questionnaire results

Discussion

The current study investigated the implementation of blended learning in private colleges in China. It examined the validity and reliability of a scale designed to measure effective teaching behaviors in a blended learning environment.

The data reveals that blended learning is widely adopted by EFL teachers in private colleges in China. However, the extent of its implementation varies due to differences in teacher perceptions, available resources, and institutional support. Effective teaching behaviors in this context include engaging students through interactive content, balancing online and offline instruction, and showing genuine interest in students' progress. These behaviors can be enhanced through comprehensive training, continuous professional development, and access to updated resources, enabling teachers to optimize their blended learning approaches.

First, through an open-ended question survey, we found that all teachers currently use blended learning. Consistent with the results of previous studies (Gaol & Hutagalung, 2020; Atwa et al., 2022), blended learning has been increasingly implemented. However, the effectiveness of blended learning varies. Because there are few studies on EFL blended learning from the teachers' perspective(Anthony, 2022), exploring this dimension is far from sufficient. Compared to investigating the influencing factors on teachers in public universities(Zheng et al., 2021), we found that teaching experience is an essential factor affecting the implementation of blended learning for teachers in private universities. Senior teachers with longer teaching years spent much less time on online teaching compared to offline teaching. For them, online teaching is often independent of offline teaching content, serving as supplementary extracurricular activities and interest expansions. Students' performance in online learning does not affect offline learning. On the other hand, younger teachers with shorter teaching experience tend to allocate a more significant proportion of their teaching to online methods. One teacher even reported an equal balance between online and offline teaching. They see online teaching as an extension of offline

teaching, using online platforms to assign vital points, complex issues, and routine tasks to students. Students are expected to solve these problems using online learning materials or Q&A sessions with the teacher. If students do not perform well in online learning, it directly affects their offline learning and, consequently, their overall learning progress.

Second, the differing ratios of online to offline learning among teachers in blended learning can be attributed to several factors: a. Teacher cognition: Older, more experienced teachers have well-established teaching habits and are less inclined to adopt new changes. In contrast, younger teachers, with fewer years of teaching, have not yet developed mature teaching systems and are more willing to embrace new teaching models. They are more eager to explore innovative teaching methods and fully utilize the benefits of ICT, believing that students can master course content using existing online resources. b. Teacher training: Currently, there is limited training related to blended learning for teachers in Chinese private colleges, with most teachers needing to navigate the process independently. The rare training sessions are usually focused on using platform tools associated with textbooks. These trainings often cover only basic operations. To effectively implement blended learning, teachers must have a comprehensive understanding of the course, including how to assign online content and provide offline guidance reasonably. Enhancing training and sharing successful case studies can broaden teachers' perspectives and help them develop new instructional structures for their courses. c. Platform resources: Although nearly all EFL teachers use blended learning, most rely on a few platforms. For communication and problem-solving, teachers predominantly use instant messaging apps like WeChat and DingTalk. At the same time, online resources mainly come from the learning platforms provided by textbook publishers, with some teachers mentioning MOOCs. However, as information technology evolves, these online learning platforms rarely update, leading to a disconnect from current societal developments. Students face contemporary issues that these platforms cannot address. Students in private colleges often have weak English foundations but are highly active thinkers who frequently relate their learning to real-life situations. Many online learning platforms focus predominantly on academic explanations, causing some students to lose motivation and interest in learning. This aligns broadly with previous research (Trigwell, 2013; Khechine, 2014; Powell, 2015; Anthony, 2022), which concurs that technology and equipment are primary factors influencing the implementation of blended learning. This principle is just as relevant in private institutions.

Finally, there is a discrepancy between teachers and students. While teachers believe they are engaging in blended learning and assigning many online tasks, the subsequent SEEQ questionnaire reveals that students spend very little time learning English online after class. This indicates that despite teachers assigning online learning tasks, students do not take them seriously, leading to ineffective blended learning outcomes. This aspect is rarely mentioned from either the student's or the teacher's perspective. Kharb and Samanta (2016) explored blended learning in anatomy education, presenting insights from both students and instructors. However, they did not address the connection between these two perspectives. This study, by analyzing both students and teachers, highlights a discrepancy in learning time, which impacts the implementation of blended learning. This issue has not been addressed in other studies.

For the second research question, EFL learners perceive effective teaching behaviors to include interest and value, the teacher's style and enthusiasm, management, and assignment setting. From the student questionnaires, it was found that in the blended English learning process, students place a higher value on whether the teacher can stimulate their interest in learning (M=4.1). For the first factor, the dimensions derived from the questionnaires of private university

students in the context of blended learning align with the dimensions proposed by Marsh (1982). This indicates that, whether in traditional face-to-face teaching or blended learning, students view engaging their interest in learning as more important for effective education than other factors like learning content and value. While compared to traditional face-to-face learning, online learning can effectively use supplementary extracurricular materials, such as pictures and videos that interest students, to fully stimulate their curiosity and interest.

Regarding teaching style and enthusiasm, for the second factor, enthusiasm and style, private institute students believe that in blended learning, thorough preparation of teaching materials and clear explanations are considered part of the teacher's teaching style. This differs from the dimensions proposed by Marsh (1982), indicating that students place more importance on whether the teacher's explanations are clear. Additionally, students believe "the instructor was dynamic and energetic in conducting the course" as most important (M=4.29). This highlights the advantage of blended learning over single-mode teaching. When students only participate in online education, the absence of face-to-face interaction with teachers can make the learning experience feel dull, as digital teaching cannot replace the emotional connection between teachers and students. Combining online teaching supplements with the real-time interaction of offline teaching makes students value the in-person experience more.

The third factor includes 19 items, far exceeding the four items proposed by Marsh (1982), and encompasses three factors from Marsh's (1982) questionnaire. This indicates that private university students in blended learning do not clearly distinguish between group interaction, individual relationships, and classroom organization in English learning. In blended learning, online learning effectively stimulates students' engagement and desire to express themselves, allowing them to integrate into the classroom genuinely. Students found the following teaching behaviors more compelling: "the instructor was friendly towards individual students" (M=4.27), "students were encouraged to participate in class discussions" (M=4.26), and "the instructor made students feel welcome in seeking help/advice in or outside of class" (M= 4.23). These data indicate that in blended learning, students can participate in the classroom genuinely. Moreover, they consider the teacher's friendly and encouraging behavior the most critical factor. This factor differs from Marsh's (1982) classification and underscores that in Chinese private institutes, the pleasant and encouraging behavior of teachers in blended learning is a distinctive feature.

The fourth factor aligns with the dimensions proposed by Marsh (1982). Students perceive EFL courses as relatively complex, and the in-class teaching time is insufficient. Blended learning can effectively address this issue. However, there is a discrepancy between the student's online learning time and the time allocated by teachers in the open-ended survey. The students' online learning time is less than what the teachers assigned, indicating a lack of adequate supervision in online teaching.

Based on the above factor analysis, students in the context of blended learning for EFL place greater importance on the teacher's ability to make lessons exciting and engaging, as well as the teacher's enthusiasm and friendly encouragement, which motivate active participation. Students in Chinese private universities particularly value effective teaching behaviors, such as clear explanations and well-prepared materials. This reflects their unique characteristics, including a weaker foundational knowledge but strong participation and enthusiasm (Yang & Qiu, 2017). Therefore, teachers should enhance these aspects in their future teaching practices to better guide and support their students.

Conclusion

This study exams the implementation and effectiveness of blended learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Chinese private colleges, in response to the limitations of traditional classroom teaching and online-only models. The findings reveal that blended learning is widely adopted in these institutions. However, the balance between online and offline components varies based on teacher perceptions, resource limitations, and the quality of institutional training. Students generally accept the blended learning model, with effective teaching behaviors critical to its success. These behaviors include engaging and interactive instruction, which students found beneficial in improving their English proficiency. However, there a gap remains between the assigned online learning and actual student engagement. To address this, institutions should focus on comprehensive teacher training and regularly updated resources to leverage the benefits of blended learning fully. Additionally, students need to take an active role in maximizing both online and offline learning opportunities to enhance their English skills.

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