



An Engagement-Oriented Teaching Model for College English in the AI Era

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ABSTRACT

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used in College English teaching through AI tools, online learning platforms, automated feedback, speech practice, and digital learning resources. However, the effectiveness of technology-enhanced teaching depends on how technology is integrated into classroom teaching and whether it promotes students' learning engagement. When technology use is not closely connected with teaching objectives and appropriate teaching strategies, students' participation may remain at a surface level. Therefore, this conceptual paper examines how digital technologies, including AI tools, can be integrated with different teaching strategies to support students' learning engagement in College English classrooms. Based on Learning Engagement Theory, Self-Determination Theory, the Input and Output Hypotheses, and related studies on College English teaching, the paper develops an integrated teaching model that combines interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching. The model explains how the three teaching strategies can support emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. Interactive teaching can increase students' interest, enjoyment, and sense of belonging through teacher-student and student-student interaction. Technology-enhanced teaching can provide learning resources, immediate feedback, and support for deep thinking and self-directed learning. Task-based teaching can encourage students to participate in classroom activities, complete meaningful language tasks, and use English for communication. The paper proposes five teaching principles and a five-stage teaching process for College English classrooms in the AI era. It concludes that technology should serve teaching objectives and students' learning needs. Teachers should combine different teaching strategies, guide students to use AI responsibly, and evaluate both learning processes and learning outcomes.

KEYWORDS:

artificial intelligence, College English, teaching strategies, interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, task-based teaching, learning engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technology are changing College English teaching. Teachers can use AI tools, multimedia, online learning platforms, educational software, and digital resources to present teaching content, provide learning materials, support language practice, and collect feedback. Generative AI can also help teachers prepare texts, create questions, design classroom tasks, and provide suggestions for students' speaking and writing.

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These tools are useful in large College English classes, where teachers may have limited time to provide individual support. However, current research also shows that the educational value of AI depends on teaching design, teacher guidance, and students' actual participation in learning (Bond et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2023).

Technology use and effective learning are not the same. The number of online activities, student logins, or completed tasks can show whether students have used a platform, but these records cannot fully show whether students are interested in learning, think deeply, or actively use English. Learning engagement helps explain how students participate emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally in the learning process. It includes emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Wong & Liem, 2022). Emotional engagement refers to

students' interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and sense of belonging. Cognitive engagement refers to deep thinking, connecting new knowledge with previous knowledge, reflecting on learning strategies, and making an effort to understand complex materials. Behavioral engagement refers to careful listening, active participation, task completion, preview and review, and continued English learning inside and outside the classroom.

This distinction is important in College English teaching in the AI era. Some students may use AI to finish an assignment quickly, but they may not understand the content or be able to explain the final answer. Other students may use simple digital tools but still take part in discussions, reflect on feedback, and revise their work carefully. Therefore, the key question is not simply whether teachers use digital technologies, but how technology can be integrated with appropriate teaching strategies to support students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement.

Based on relevant theories, previous studies, and the three teaching strategies examined in this paper, an integrated conceptual model is proposed for College English teaching in the AI era. First, it explains learning engagement and the theories related to teaching strategies. Second, it discusses how interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching can support different dimensions of learning engagement. Third, it proposes teaching principles and a five-stage teaching process, followed by examples of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation activities. The purpose of this model is to provide a clear framework for classroom teaching and future empirical research.

2. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Learning Engagement and Related Theories

Learning engagement refers to students' active participation and involvement in learning. It consists of three related dimensions: emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). Emotional engagement includes students' interest, enjoyment, excitement, satisfaction, and sense of belonging. Cognitive engagement includes connecting new knowledge with what students already know, thinking about the logic and patterns behind language knowledge, reflecting on learning strategies, adjusting learning methods, and making an effort to understand the deeper meaning of complex materials. Behavioral engagement includes listening carefully in class, completing learning tasks, previewing and reviewing course content, participating in discussions and activities, learning English outside class, and asking teachers or classmates for help (Fredricks et al., 2004; Wong & Liem, 2022).

The three dimensions are different but closely related. Interest and enjoyment can encourage students to participate more actively. Active participation can provide more opportunities to practise English. Deep thinking and reflection can help students improve their learning methods.

Learning engagement is also affected by teaching strategies, task difficulty, teacher feedback, classroom interaction, and the learning environment (Zhou et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers should consider all three dimensions when designing College English activities in the AI era.

2.2 Self-Determination Theory and students' learning motivation

Self-Determination Theory explains how teaching conditions affect students' learning motivation. Students are more likely to participate actively when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). AI tools can give students more choices in learning content, time, and pace. Immediate feedback and suitable learning materials can also help students feel more confident. However, if students depend too much on AI, they may reduce their own effort. If AI activities replace teacher-student and student-student interaction, students may also lose their sense of connection with the class.

Teacher guidance and support are therefore important in learning supported by digital technologies. Teachers need to explain the learning objectives, organize classroom activities, monitor students' learning, provide feedback, and help students evaluate AI-generated content. Student-centered teaching does not mean that teachers should reduce their role. Instead, teachers should create suitable learning conditions and help students use technology in ways that support real learning (Chiu et al., 2024; Kok et al., 2025).

2.3 Interaction, language input and output, and meaningful tasks

English learning develops through interaction and language use. Interactive teaching may include activities such as discussions, question-and-answer activities, pair work, group work, role-plays, and peer feedback. These activities provide opportunities for students to exchange ideas, share learning experiences, and use English for communication. AI-generated materials can support these activities, but they should not replace teacher-student and student-student interaction.

In addition to motivation and learning engagement, language learning also requires meaningful input and opportunities for language use. The Input and Output Hypotheses help explain this process: students need understandable language input and opportunities to produce English through communication and task completion (Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1995). AI tools and digital resources can provide various forms of learning support, such as texts, audio materials, examples, and feedback. However, effective language learning also requires opportunities for students to use English through activities such as speaking, writing, discussion, problem-solving, and language revision. Task-based teaching organizes learning around meaningful language tasks, such as projects, presentations, role-plays, and problem-solving activities. Students learn and use English while completing these tasks. Therefore, technology is most useful when it supports

interaction, task completion, and real language practice rather than completing the work for students (Mulyadi et al., 2021).

3. HOW TEACHING STRATEGIES PROMOTE LEARNING ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Interactive teaching and emotional engagement

Interactive teaching can promote emotional engagement by making students feel involved in the English classroom. Discussions, open-ended questions, pair work, group work, role-plays, and debates give students opportunities to express their opinions and share learning experiences. These activities can increase students' interest and enjoyment and help them develop a sense of belonging. AI tools can provide discussion topics, role-play situations, or language support, but positive classroom relationships remain important. Teachers should create a supportive classroom environment in which students are willing to speak and are not afraid of making mistakes. Students can choose topics or roles that match their interests, but all activities should have clear English learning objectives. Teachers can provide guidance on the appropriate use of digital technologies, including AI tools, and help students protect personal information, evaluate digital content, and follow relevant academic rules. Clear guidance can reduce confusion and help students feel safe and confident.

3.2 Technology-enhanced teaching and cognitive engagement

Technology-enhanced teaching can support cognitive engagement by providing different learning resources, immediate feedback, and opportunities for self-directed learning. Teachers can use multimedia, online learning platforms, English learning apps, websites, and AI tools to present content and support learning activities. However,

easy access to answers may also reduce students' thinking. If students simply copy an AI-generated paragraph, they may complete the task without understanding the language or content.

To promote cognitive engagement, teachers should ask students to check AI-generated information, compare different answers, identify errors, explain their choices, and revise their work. Students can also reflect on their learning strategies and adjust their learning methods according to feedback. In this way, AI tools can help students connect new knowledge with previous knowledge, understand language patterns, and develop deeper thinking rather than rely on mechanical memorization (Walter, 2024).

3.3 Task-based teaching and behavioral engagement

Task-based teaching can be supported by digital technologies that provide learning materials, communication channels, and opportunities for English practice inside and outside the classroom. However, platform records such as logins, clicks, and viewing time do not necessarily show meaningful learning. Teachers should examine what students actually do and what language they produce. Task-based teaching can promote behavioral engagement by giving students clear tasks and communicative purposes. Tasks may include projects, presentations, problem-solving, role-plays, or the production of a campus English guide. Students should use English to complete the task, share the outcome, and respond to teachers' and classmates' feedback. AI can support planning, resource collection, practice, and revision, but students should make their own decisions and complete the main language work. Clear roles, suitable task difficulty, and opportunities to improve can encourage active participation and continued effort.

Table 1. Teaching Strategies, Learning Engagement, and Classroom Activities in College English

Teaching strategy	Main classroom activities	Main dimension of learning engagement	Possible problems	Teaching suggestions
Interactive Teaching	Discussions, Q&A, pair work, group work, role-plays, debates	Emotional engagement: interest, enjoyment, confidence, and sense of belonging	Interaction may remain at a surface level; some students may not participate	Use open-ended questions, clear group roles, supportive feedback, and topics related to students' interests
Technology -Enhanced Teaching	Multimedia, online learning platforms, learning apps, AI tools, and digital resources	Cognitive engagement: deep thinking, reflection, learning strategies, and self-directed learning	Students may copy answers, depend on AI, or complete online activities mechanically	Require students to check information, compare answers, explain choices, and revise their work

Teaching strategy	Main classroom activities	Main dimension of learning engagement	Possible problems	Teaching suggestions
Task-Based Teaching	Projects, presentations, problem-solving, role-plays, and other meaningful language tasks	Behavioral engagement: participation, task completion, language practice, and persistence	Tasks may be too difficult; group members may contribute unequally	Match task difficulty with students' English proficiency, assign clear roles, and provide opportunities for presentation and feedback

4. AN INTEGRATED TEACHING MODEL FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH IN THE AI ERA

Based on Learning Engagement Theory, Self-Determination Theory, the Input and Output Hypotheses, and previous studies on the three teaching strategies, this paper proposes an integrated conceptual model for College English teaching in the AI era. Self-Determination Theory explains how teacher support, classroom interaction, and appropriate learning choices may strengthen students' motivation. The Input and Output Hypotheses explain the importance of meaningful language input, active language use, and communication. Based on these theoretical perspectives, the

model integrates the three teaching strategies to support different dimensions of students' learning engagement.

Figure 1 presents the integrated teaching model. Teachers first identify the teaching objectives and students' learning needs. They then select and combine interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching. During the teaching process, teachers provide guidance, feedback, and assessment. The three teaching strategies work together to support emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. Improved learning engagement can provide more opportunities for students to understand, practise, and use English.

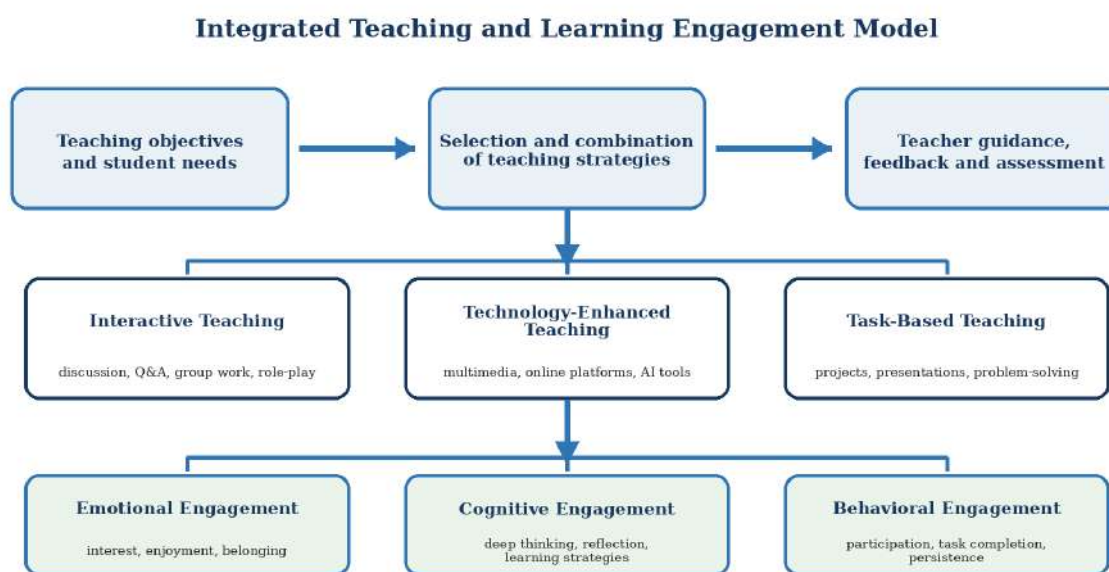


Figure 1. Integrated teaching and learning engagement model for College English in the AI era.

4.1 Five teaching principles

Based on the theoretical discussion and previous studies, this paper proposes five teaching principles for College English classrooms in the AI era.

Principle 1: Start from teaching objectives and students' learning needs. Teachers should first identify the English learning objectives and students' learning needs before selecting teaching strategies or digital tools. Different classroom activities can then be designed to support students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement.

Principle 2: Combine different teaching strategies appropriately. Interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching can be used separately or in combination according to the teaching content and classroom situation. Digital technologies, including AI tools, should support teaching activities rather than determine the teaching process.

Principle 3: Maintain classroom interaction and active participation. Teachers can create opportunities for teacher-student and student-student interaction through activities

such as discussions, question-and-answer activities, pair work, group work, and peer feedback. Digital tools can provide additional materials and communication channels, but teacher guidance and classroom interaction remain important.

Principle 4: Promote deep thinking through meaningful language tasks. Teachers can organize projects, presentations, problem-solving activities, role-plays, and other meaningful language tasks. Students should be encouraged to connect new and previous knowledge, compare information, reflect on their learning strategies, revise their work, and use English during task completion.

Principle 5: Consider both learning engagement and learning outcomes. The evaluation of students’ learning can consider their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement, together with their task performance and English learning outcomes. Platform records may provide

useful information, but they may not fully reflect students’ interest, thinking, participation, or actual use of English.

4.2 A five-stage teaching process

Drawing on the general task-based teaching process and adapting it to College English classrooms in the AI era, this paper proposes a flexible five-stage process: pre-task preparation, task introduction, task implementation, outcome presentation and feedback, and reflection and extension. The integrated model can be implemented through five stages: pre-task preparation, task introduction, task implementation, outcome presentation and feedback, and reflection and extension. The process can be used in one lesson or across several lessons. At each stage, teachers can appropriately combine interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching, while selecting suitable AI tools and digital resources according to the teaching content and students’ needs.

Stage	Teaching activities	Main teaching strategies and engagement
1. Pre-task preparation	Teachers identify teaching objectives and student needs, select learning materials and AI tools, and explain rules for responsible AI use.	Technology-enhanced teaching; cognitive preparation
2. Task introduction	Teachers introduce the situation, task requirements, communicative purpose, and expected outcome. Students discuss initial ideas.	Interactive teaching and task-based teaching; emotional and behavioral engagement
3. Task implementation	Students work individually, in pairs, or in groups. They use English to complete the task. AI provides materials, practice, or feedback when needed.	Combination of the three teaching strategies; cognitive and behavioral engagement
4. Outcome presentation and feedback	Students present or share their outcomes. Teachers and classmates ask questions, provide feedback, and discuss language use.	Interactive teaching; emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement
5. Reflection and extension	Students revise their work, reflect on learning strategies, and complete related practice inside or outside class.	Technology-enhanced teaching and task-based teaching; cognitive and behavioral engagement

5. EXAMPLES OF INTEGRATED COLLEGE ENGLISH CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The following examples illustrate how the integrated model may be applied to listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation activities.

5.1 Listening: Digital Resources and Meaningful Response

In a listening lesson, teachers can select audio or video materials according to the teaching objectives and students’ English proficiency. Before listening, students may discuss the topic, predict the content, and become familiar with key expressions. During listening, they can identify the main ideas, record important information, and compare their

understanding with classmates. After listening, students may summarize the content, answer questions, or complete a related communicative task.

Digital resources, including AI tools, can provide materials at different levels of difficulty and offer additional listening practice when appropriate. Interactive activities can encourage students to share their understanding, while follow-up tasks can provide opportunities to use information from the listening materials. These activities may support students’ interest, thinking, and active participation.

5.2 Speaking: Technology-Supported Practice and Classroom Communication

In a speaking lesson based on a topic or context, teachers can introduce the communicative context, key vocabulary, and task requirements. Students may use a digital tool, such as an AI chatbot, for additional language practice. They can record words or expressions that they find difficult and evaluate the feedback provided by the tool. In class, students can work in pairs or groups to complete a role-play using new information rather than repeating a prepared dialogue.

This activity combines technology-enhanced teaching, interactive teaching, and task-based teaching. Digital tools can provide additional practice and feedback, while pair work, group work, and role-play create opportunities for classroom interaction and meaningful language use. The activity may promote students' interest, confidence, active participation, and ability to use English in different situations.

5.3 Reading: Digital Resources and Deep Understanding

In a reading lesson, teachers can select texts that are appropriate for the teaching objectives and students' English proficiency. Digital resources, including AI tools, may be used to explain difficult words, provide background information, adjust text difficulty, or generate supplementary questions. Students can compare different versions of a text, identify the main ideas and supporting details, and discuss information that has been changed or omitted.

Students can also evaluate whether digitally generated explanations and examples are accurate, natural, and suitable for the context. These activities can encourage students to connect new information with previous knowledge, examine the meaning of the text, and reflect on their reading strategies. Teachers can provide guidance and reliable sources to help students evaluate digital content.

5.4 Writing: Digital Feedback and Careful Revision

In a writing lesson, students can first prepare their own ideas and complete an initial draft. They may then use teacher feedback, peer feedback, or digital tools, including AI tools, to receive suggestions on content, organization, evidence, and language. Rather than accepting all suggestions directly, students can compare them, decide which suggestions are appropriate, and explain the reasons for their decisions. They can also check factual information and revise their writing accordingly.

This activity combines interactive teaching and technology-enhanced teaching through teacher, peer, and digital feedback. It can promote cognitive engagement by encouraging students to identify problems, reflect on their writing strategies, and revise their work. Teachers can consider both the final text and the revision process when evaluating students' learning.

5.5 Translation: Comparison, Discussion, and Language Revision

In a translation lesson, teachers can provide a short text related to students' study, daily life, or future work. Students

can first complete the translation individually and then compare their work in pairs or groups. Digital dictionaries, online language resources, or AI tools may be used to provide alternative expressions or additional reference materials. Students can compare different translations and discuss differences in meaning, language use, and cultural context.

Students can then revise their translations and explain why they selected particular words or expressions. This activity combines technology-enhanced teaching, interactive teaching, and task-based teaching. It may support cognitive engagement through comparison and reflection, behavioral engagement through task completion and revision, and emotional engagement through discussion and collaborative learning.

These examples show that digital technologies, including AI tools, can be used in different College English activities, but they are not the central purpose of teaching. Teachers can combine interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching according to specific teaching objectives and students' learning needs. Through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation activities, the three teaching strategies can work together to support students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The importance of focusing on learning engagement

A technology-enhanced lesson should not be considered successful only because the technology works smoothly or students complete many online activities. The main question is whether students show interest in English learning, think carefully about the learning content, participate in classroom activities, complete meaningful tasks, and improve their ability to use English. This change in focus can help College English reform move from an emphasis on technology use to an emphasis on students' learning process.

Previous studies suggest that the three teaching strategies may support different but overlapping dimensions of learning engagement. Interactive teaching mainly supports classroom communication, interest, and a sense of belonging. Technology-enhanced teaching provides learning resources, immediate feedback, and support for self-directed learning and deep thinking. Task-based teaching encourages participation and language use through meaningful tasks. Teachers should combine the three strategies according to different teaching objectives and students' learning situations rather than depend on one teaching method.

6.2 The role of College English teachers

The increasing use of digital technologies, including AI tools, does not remove the need for teacher guidance. College English teachers continue to play important roles in selecting suitable tools and resources, designing learning activities, explaining task requirements, monitoring students' participation, and providing feedback. They can also guide students in evaluating digital content and recognizing possible problems associated with AI-generated information,

such as inaccuracies, bias, privacy risks, and differences in access to technology (UNESCO, 2023; Walter, 2024).

Teacher training therefore needs to go beyond the operation of particular digital tools. It can help teachers connect technology use with teaching objectives, classroom interaction, meaningful language tasks, learning engagement, and assessment. Teachers can also collaborate in designing classroom activities, examining students' learning processes, discussing common teaching problems, and developing guidance for the responsible use of digital technologies and AI tools. Universities can support these efforts by providing reliable resources, practical guidance, and opportunities for professional development.

6.3 Responsible and Equitable Use of Digital Technologies and AI

Students may differ in their access to digital devices, online learning platforms, paid AI services, and other forms of learning support. They may also have different levels of ability to evaluate digital and AI-generated information. Teachers can therefore consider these differences when designing technology-enhanced activities and provide suitable alternatives when necessary. The assessment of students' work should focus on their learning process, task performance, and use of English rather than on their access to more advanced technological tools.

Responsible technology use also involves the protection of personal information and the careful evaluation of digital content. Teachers can guide students in identifying information that may be inaccurate, biased, or culturally inappropriate. They can also explain relevant academic rules concerning the use of digital resources and AI assistance in learning tasks.

Digital technologies, including AI tools, can be used when they appropriately support the teaching objectives and students' learning needs. When classroom discussion, teacher feedback, textbooks, or other resources are more suitable, the use of AI may not be necessary. The purpose of technology-enhanced teaching is not simply to increase the use of technology, but to create better conditions for students' learning engagement and English learning.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Future empirical research can test the proposed model and examine how interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching are related to students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in different College English contexts. It can also investigate whether teacher support, AI literacy, task difficulty, or students' English proficiency affects these relationships. Researchers should distinguish meaningful participation from simple platform use and should examine whether students can apply what they have learned without AI support.

Future studies can use questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, students' learning records, and English performance tasks. Longitudinal studies can examine

changes in learning engagement over time. Researchers can also compare students from different grades, majors, universities, and English proficiency levels. These studies can provide clearer evidence about the proposed model and how the three teaching strategies are related to learning engagement in different College English contexts.

7. CONCLUSION

The main challenge of College English teaching in the AI era is not simply whether digital technology is used, but how it is appropriately integrated with teaching objectives, teaching strategies, and students' learning needs. AI tools and digital resources can provide materials, feedback, and additional practice. However, they may also lead to passive learning or overdependence if students use them only to obtain answers or complete tasks quickly. Teaching objectives, classroom interaction, task design, teacher guidance, and assessment determine whether technology can promote effective learning.

The integrated model proposed in this paper combines interactive teaching, technology-enhanced teaching, and task-based teaching to support emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. It recommends that teachers start from teaching objectives and students' needs, maintain classroom interaction, encourage deep thinking and reflection, organize meaningful language tasks, and assess both learning processes and outcomes. In the AI era, student-centered College English teaching does not mean using more technology. It means using technology appropriately to create conditions that may support students' interest, understanding, active participation, and English learning.

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