

# A Study of College English Teaching Mode Based on OBE Concepts

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## ABSTRACT

As the economy and society develop, the labor market needs more senior English personnel with better ability and innovation. Currently, English teaching still stays in the traditional mode, that is, the students only learn language knowledge rather than the skills of communication. Therefore, the all-round ability is very poor for the students. College English teaching based on OBE concept can solve this problem quite well. OBE aims at the language output, and hence improves the English application ability and innovation ability of students. Therefore, English teaching based on OBE can satisfy the requirements of current English education. Also, it is of great importance to explore OBE-based English teaching in order to create a golden course and improve the innovation of the curriculum. By analyzing the teaching concepts of OBE and combined the concrete teaching conditions of college English, the author put forward some OBE strategies on college English teaching and implemented them into the English teaching practice.

**Keywords:** College English teaching; Outcome-based education; innovation ability; All-round ability

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English teaching has played an important role in all education stages in China, including both basic education and higher education. This trend, however, will still increase, which indicates the importance and necessity of English course. Except for the students in specific major, College English is a public, basic and compulsory general course for students of non-English majors. Since it began in 1978, College English course is set up to train students for profession and learn advanced western technology, in order to serve the development of economy in China. After nearly 40 years of development, college English has grown up from attempt to maturity. At present, the purpose of College English teaching is much more specified. It aims to improve students' basically English skills, all-round ability and cultural literacy.

With the improvement of national strength and deepening of international exchange, China needs urgently the talents with strong professional ability and high-level foreign language. However, there are still many problems in the current College English teaching in China. The teaching effect is not satisfactory and it is difficult to meet the needs of society. Universities and colleges at all levels actively implement the instructions and guidance of the Ministry of Education, further promote the reform of College English teaching, and strive to improve the quality of college English teaching. But there are still some problems in the current college English teaching environments. For example, some researchers find that class hours decrease for teaching in large classes. From the perspective of teachers, most of them are very dedicated to teaching. They prepare carefully for teaching before class and

correct the homework after class. On the other hand, from the perspective of students, they pay much attention to reading and writing but ignore listening and speaking training, and they only stay at low-level of individual learning due to their weak base. Students are tired of listening and can not focus on learning. Consequently, the learning effect is bad. Some researchers have made an in-depth study of the effectiveness of college English teaching. They found that students generally advocate College English curriculum, and they also recognize it as necessary. They also honor the work of college English teachers, but they think that the effect and effectiveness of English teaching are not satisfying.

## 2. TEACHING CONCEPTS OF OBE

It has developed for 40 years since Spady[1], a famous American scholar, put forward the principles of outcome-based education. It always adheres to the guidance of student-centered, outcome-oriented, and continuous improvement concepts, and its connotation becomes much rich. As the initiator of OBE, Spady believes that OBE is the right adjustment of resources and systems and makes it clear and focus on the substantive experience that will enable students to succeed in their future life. It stresses what students can do after learning rather than what they have learned. Therefore, it is a rebalancing of teaching and learning. In the OBE system, students internalize knowledge into a specific ability after learning. As a new paradigm of educational reform, the content of OBE is broad and profound, including one goal, two requirements, three prerequisites, four supports and five links. Among them, one goal is to enable all students to achieve the final

results. The two requirements are to accurately define and clearly present the learning results, and thus guide the optimization of curriculum. The three prerequisites are that students control the conditions of success, firmly believe that confidence is the mother of success, and make all students succeed. The four supports mean to understand students' learning needs, show their progress, provide a variety of evaluation data and release students' potential abilities. The five links mean to define the results, design curriculum, teach subjects, certificate results and determine the levels. Compared with traditional education, OBE pays more attention to the overall development of students, and the evaluation feedback mechanism constructed is more fair and objective[2]. It improves the pertinence of teaching, which helps students better adapt to the challenges of future work, and it is an important direction of the development of modern higher education.

### **3. ENGLISH TEACHING UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF OBE**

#### ***3.1. Re-Orientating the Objectives of College English Teaching and Build a Modular College English Curriculum Group***

Spardy proposed that the design of curriculum system based on OBE must follow the principle of design down. The so-called 'design down' refers to reverse design of all curriculum elements, including curriculum setting, objectives, contents, development, evaluation, etc., around the final learning results that students can achieve when they graduate, so as to guide students to achieve the expected learning results. In other words, the designers of curriculum system should first have a clear idea of the final outcome of learning that students should obtain when they graduate, and then design appropriate curriculum structure to ensure that they achieve these expected goals [3]. Obviously, in order to build an application-oriented college English curriculum system, the designer needs to understand what the ultimate goal of curriculum teaching should be. Spardy held that 'learning has no meaning unless the outcome can reflect the real life and the roles that students will confront after completing their studies'. From this opinion, application-oriented College English teaching of undergraduate must change the past approach of subject-orientation. According to the external and internal demands, i.e., social demand and professional training demand, the designer should re-position the teaching goal of the curriculum. Considering the needs of students' successful development in the future after graduation, we should not only make students acquire the basic ability to communicate in English at the background of international environment, but also help students to acquire the ability to read and write professional English documents. The designer should develop modular curriculum group to support the achievement of the expected outcome of learning according to these ability

requirements. The whole curriculum system can be divided into general English module, special purpose English module, cross-cultural communication English module and characteristic English module. Each course group is set according to different ability training objectives. The general English module focuses on training students' basic skills in English, while the special purpose English module focuses on training students' professional English ability. It trains students' ability to transfer knowledge from classroom and textbook to real work situation. The English module of cross-cultural communication focuses on the improvement of students' cross-cultural communication ability, while the special English module offers English courses reflecting school-based characteristics and local characteristics. According to the basic ability requirements, compulsory courses shall be set up to meet the needs of ability development, and selective courses will be provided to meet the students' professional learning, postgraduate entrance examination, job employment and personal interest and development.

#### ***3.2. Adhere to the Concept of 'Learning and Using in One', Build a College English Practical Teaching System Guided by Output***

The core of applied talents is "use", and the essence is the application of learning. Therefore, to cultivate practical personnel, we should embody the connotation of application in the construction of teaching system, and its core link is practical teaching. Classroom teaching should jump out of the "book-centered" and "teacher-centered" concepts, and change from indoctrination classroom to action classroom, from knowledge to ability class, emphasize what students learn and can do, attach importance to output and ability, and encourage critical thinking, reasoning, evaluation, feedback and action. With activities as the carrier and output as the goal, students' English ability can be improved through learning and practice. In the process of teaching, teachers should be good at taking "output" task as the starting point to arouse students' practical desire. By completing various "output" tasks with communicative value, especially those based on real life situations and workplace situations, students learn language in "doing" and use language in "doing" to promote the synchronous development of language ability, learning ability and communication ability[4].

In order to make up for the lack of practical teaching time, we should actively develop the second language classroom, expand the time and space of language practice, and expand the opportunities for students to learn and use. OBE scheme advocates that all students can achieve what they have learned, but not in simultaneous and the same way. Schools and teachers have the responsibility to provide students with opportunities to achieve successful learning. In order to meet the personalized learning needs of students and ensure more learning opportunities for students, it is necessary to build a mobile teaching platform integrating network teaching platform, subject

competition platform and social practice platform. By using online English teaching platform, we can release the learning tasks that can be selected by students with different abilities, so that students can make their learning plan. Students can choose learning tasks suitable for themselves according to their actual situation, improve the efficiency of input, facilitate the completion of output tasks, and have more opportunities to show learning achievements. Using the subject competition platform, teacher can help students to discover their English learning potential, train their all-round English ability and develop their innovative practical ability. All kinds of English competitions, such as national college students' English competition and speech competition, provide students with the opportunity to integrate theory with practice. These activities encourage students to think and practice actively, improve students' ability to understand and use knowledge, and make the students experience the fun of successful learning. By using the social practice platform, it cultivates and trains students' English practice ability. Through participating in some social practice activities, such as international exhibition volunteer service, students have realized the use value of learning English. They have understood the social need and found their own shortcomings, and this will make them learn English more specifically and enhance their ability to adapt to and serve society.

#### **4. SOME STRATEGIES ON THE TEACHING OF OBE MODE**

##### ***4.1. Setting OBE Teaching Objectives***

According to the characteristics of college English curriculum, the OBE teaching objectives, including knowledge and technology objectives, process and method objectives, emotion, attitude and values objectives, are determined according to the students' graduation requirements. To speak specifically, teachers can set up a series of executive and operational goals to achieve the teaching objectives. According to this goal, teachers reversely design the teaching activity and classroom teaching and assessment.

Curriculum objectives refer to the specific objectives and intentions of the curriculum itself, which are the important basis for curriculum content design, process implementation and curriculum evaluation. Setting reasonable and clear curriculum objectives can help teachers and students understand the curriculum much clearer. The goal of the course specifies the degree that students are expected to achieve in knowledge, ability and quality after learning the course. The curriculum objectives come from the requirements of graduation, and they are implemented in the teaching process and reflected in the learning achievements of students. It is the basis for determining the curriculum content and teaching methods. The course objective is equivalent to the general outlines

of a course, which should be carefully sorted out and carefully summarized. The teaching objectives of OBE curriculum must be set according to the graduation requirements of the curriculum. Therefore, the course objectives should be clear, specific and detailed, which can support the graduation requirements. The concept of OBE is outcome-oriented and aims at students' teaching effect. Generally speaking, graduation requirements represent students' learning achievements and students' abilities. Teachers should start from graduation requirements and reversely design teaching links and teaching processes. When setting the course objectives, we should put aside the contents of chapters and comprehensively consider the position of the course in the educational program and the discipline system. In terms of ability embodiment, the corresponding graduation requirements of the curriculum should be implemented in the teaching content of the course.

The traditional teaching objectives are designed according to the three dimensions of knowledge, ability and emotional goals, which require teachers to deal with these goals flexibly. The design of teaching objectives based on the OBE concept comes from the graduation requirements. The curriculum syllabus is designed by corresponding graduation requirements of the curriculum, and the objectives are defined in the syllabus. This curriculum objective must be designed for students, and the goal can be achieved by students. The goal must be clear, measurable and evaluable. Also, the curriculum goal should be implemented in the corresponding teaching contents, process and links, which requires teachers to teach according to the curriculum objectives. In order to effectively evaluate the achievement of graduation requirements, the graduation requirements should be specified according to the characteristics of the curriculum. The course objectives are established in combination with the contents, and the detailed graduation requirements [5].

##### ***4.2. Changing the Teaching Concepts***

In a word, college English teaching is implemented by teacher. Therefore, as the main body of teaching, the concept of teachers and students must be fundamentally changed to promote the OBE concept as guidance of college English teaching and improve the effectiveness of college English teaching. The specific changes are listed as follows. (i) Correctly handle the relationship between language input and output. College English teaching involves listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills. Listening and reading belong to English input skills while speaking and writing belong to English output skills. Translation belongs to advanced all-round skills. Only enough inputs lead to high level of output. The process of learning English for college students is the process from listening to understanding and expression. Therefore, in OBE teaching, teachers should set the input as the learning goal, and let students stay in an input environment. This will make them listen and read more information. This scheme will eventually lead to the

enhancement of output ability for students. (ii) The deep integration of college English teaching and information technology. By setting up the teaching contents and objectives of OBE, teachers should try their best to promote the integration of college English and information technology, make the combination of online and offline, in class and out of class, and strive to build a smart classroom, create a high-quality golden course, and provide help for students to achieve the OBE goal.

### ***4.3. Setting up Electronic Portfolio for Students***

At present, many college English courses have realized graded teaching and online course selection, which causes the changes in the attendance number for each semester. Different teachers will adopt different teaching methods, which will affect the teaching affects. Here, we suggest that teachers should set up electronic portfolios for each student after the freshmen were divided into different classes through the graded examination. The portfolio is used to record students' learning information. It needs to "clearly explain what students have learned and what progress they have made". The main features of the electronic portfolio are listed as follows. It can collect a wide range of learning information and evidence. All teachers are able to access it. So even if the teachers and students altered, the present teachers can easily access the students' electronic portfolios. The portfolios can help teachers understand the learning information of students, such as the content they have mastered. It can help teachers to better teach students according to their learning situation and provide specific help for students with certain difficulty. The main contents of electronic portfolio are the learning contents and projects of students, the reflection in the learning process, practice activities and other records on practice activities. The portfolio can be recorded by teachers and students together, as divided into the teacher part and student part. Teachers record the learning situation for students, including classroom teaching and homework feedback. Students record their learning information encountered in the learning, including the achievement and reflection on learning.

### ***4.4. Establishing Multi-Dimensional Assessment System of College English Teaching***

Adhere to the principle of promoting learning and application by evaluation, and build a multi-dimensional and dynamical college English evaluation system [6]. Scientific and reasonable teaching assessment and evaluation can facilitate the achievement of curriculum teaching objectives, encourage students to enjoy learning and be good at learning. Since the teaching goal of application-oriented undergraduate curriculum is focused on the output ability of students, the assessment and

evaluation system should also change accordingly so as to promote the initiative and enthusiasm of students to learn and apply. First, the content of evaluation should reflect the ability of students. OBE advocates that the curriculum evaluation should focus on the ability of students to apply knowledge and examine what students can do instead of what they know and remember. Second, the process of evaluation should be scientific. The formation evaluation mechanism should be introduced and the evaluation should run through the whole learning process. It can make full use of the network teaching platform, record and evaluate the learning process of students, and help students effectively regulate their learning. Third, the evaluation methods should be diversified. In addition to the traditional teacher evaluation, we can also use the machine evaluation system, such as oral English test system, English writing test system, etc., to evaluate students' oral and writing tasks. Fourth, the evaluation results should be diversified. OBE advocates that teaching evaluation should show learning achievements to prove whether students achieve the expected learning goals.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

OBE pays attention to the practical ability that students acquire the ability after graduation, and it pays attention to the cultivation of students' all-round ability to adapt to the future and society, and meets the needs of application-oriented personnel training. Based on this advanced concept, the application-oriented college English teaching should focus on the orientation and clarify the needs of college English teaching on the basis of full investigation. Breaking through the traditional academic curriculum system, English education should pay attention to the combination of career and study, and develop a modular college English curriculum group. English teaching should optimize the practical teaching environment, create a good atmosphere of integrating knowledge and practice, and expand the learning opportunities of students. English teaching should focus on the needs of future career success of students, and train students to do things in English, so as to improve the competitiveness of students and the quality of personnel.

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