

On the OBE-based Syllabus Design of the Audiolingual-visual-speaking Course

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Abstract

This research, on the basis of outcome-based educational theory, using Unit 10 in Book 1, *New Experiencing English Viewing, Listening and Speaking* by Higher Education Press as the teaching content, aims to design a syllabus for college English class. Focusing on results' orientation of student, this paper is intended to promote the development of college English class, further improve the efficiency of college English class and also hope to provide substantial support for college English teaching studies.

Keywords: OBE theory; syllabus design; student-oriented teaching.

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1. The current situation in College English Course

Although English language teaching has improved greatly in the past 20 years, nowadays, English language teaching in China different from the countries and regions where English is the official language (Wang, 2004). This part mainly analyses college English course's current situation and it can be described into two perspectives: students and teachers. First, most of the class time is dominated by the teacher's instruction (Qu wenjie, 2004). Second, according to Christophel and Gorham, through qualitative and quantitative research on students' "lack of motivation", the results show that most of the "lack of motivation" is related to teachers. In other words, the classroom atmosphere is dreary.

1.1 Teacher's teaching mode cannot adapt to the needs of students

As for teachers, it is difficult for them to teach to meet the needs of various students in that students are at different levels. Firstly, teachers still dominate the teaching class at present and students have a low sense of participation in English class. Too much time is dominated by teachers, which leaves no time for students to output. Secondly, teachers have difficulty managing the classroom due to the large number of students. Besides, teachers cannot give timely feedback to students. The primary cause of problems is that teachers still follow the traditional teaching mode and

do not renew teaching methods in accordance with the times.

1.2 Students have a low sense of self-efficiency in college English learning

In terms of students, students have a low sense of self-efficiency in college English learning because of the lack of interest in English learning. To start with, the limited conditions in the classroom affect the students' motivation to learn. Owing to large class teaching, classroom discipline was unhealthy, so communication with the teacher is somewhat hindered, which will exert a bad impact on learning efficiency. Secondly, the students' presentations in class are meaningless and perfunctory just to meet the teacher. The content of the presentation is irrelevant to the class topic and the mechanical reading of the slides defeats the original purpose of the presentation.

2. The theory of the Outcome-Based Education

OBE (Outcome-Based Education) is student-centered instruction model that stresses on judging student performance through learning outcomes. Outcomes include knowledge, skills and behavior. Outcome-Based Education model gives more weightage on what the students will be able to 'do' instead of what they will 'know'. Generally speaking, the academic community believes that the Outcome-Based Education is proposed by William G. Spady, an American scholar.

Spady (1994) suggested “OBE means clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences.” OBE like other concepts in learning has been described in numerous ways but the core concept remains same that is by evaluating what is required to achieve and accomplish learning outcomes (Asim *et al.*, 2021). As Musarat Yasmin and Afifa Yasmeen (2021) said, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a product of the growing need for expert and skilled persons, which traditional education has limited scope to produce. Since then, this concept has been widely spread and applied in several countries and regions around the world have provided experience for teaching college English audiolingual-visual-speaking syllabus in China.

The first research on OBE in China began in 2003. The system of “Outcome-Based Education” built by Jiang Bo (2003) of Zhejiang Gongshang University. In the following years, there has been very little

research related to OBE. In 2014, Li Zhiyi introduced OBE for the first time in the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China and tried to apply it to teaching to reform practices. At present, research on Outcome-Based Education is mainly concentrated in the fields of engineering and vocational education, which is still in its initial stage and needs to be further developed. In college English, scholars have begun to focus on and gradually apply the OBE concept in their teaching practices. Hu rong (2021) held the opinion that the need for universities to establish teaching objectives which focus on students’ outcomes, build a rich teaching system, carry out enriching teaching activities and establish a diverse as well as dynamic developmental evaluation system. All in all, there exist more and more researches about OBE in China. OBE differs from traditional teaching methods in that OBE takes students’ needs as the starting point and highlights the students’ main position in the classroom. The differences between OBE class and traditional class are showed in Table-1.

Table-1

Topic	Traditional Class	OBE Class
Student	Passive	Active
Teacher	Main Position	Guider
Class Content	Text Knowledge	Topic Discussion and Q&A
Teaching Mode	Teacher’s Explanation	Group Cooperation
Teaching Tools	Multimedia	Diversification
Teaching Principle	Teacher-Oriented	Student-Oriented
Assessment	Test Paper	Diversification

This paper attempts to design a college English audiolingual-visual-speaking syllabus based on the OBE concept, with the aim of improving students’ independent learning ability and telling the Chinese story in English, thus achieving the goal of fostering virtue through education.

3. The application of the OBE in college English audiolingual-visual-speaking syllabus

Under the guidance of OBE concept, this design focuses on students’ teaching objectives and teaching outcomes, and the students play the roles and teachers act as coaches in this learning model. Sound outcome-based models incorporate several elements that work together to change how schools operate and facilitate learning success for students. These key elements are represented graphically in Figure 2.

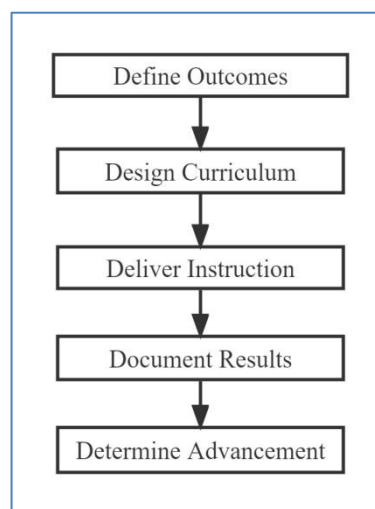


Fig-2

In this part, the tenth unit of the textbook *New Experiencing English Viewing, Listening and Speaking* is taken as an example to design the syllabus based on the OBE. The topic of this unit is *The Environment*. This syllabus design will take 90 minutes, with specific time allocated for marking in each teaching session. Based on the content of Figure 2, the learning design is presented as follows.

3.1 Define outcomes

In the process of redesigning the course objectives and content, first of all, it is clear that the focus of the outcome is not the grades but the goal is for all learners to be successful.

This design is for students majoring in Computer Science and Technology. Therefore, in the link of defining learning outcomes, it is traced that its professional training objective related to English is to have good ability of using language. That is the outcome of this class. Besides, when defining outcomes, we need to fully consider the requirements and expectations of education stakeholders. That is to say, the syllabus design is supposed to integrate the needs of government, schools, employers, students, teachers and students' parents.

3.2 Syllabus Design

3.3.1 Teaching objectives

The teaching objectives can be divided into knowledge objectives, emotion objectives and ability objective. The knowledge objectives include grasping the basic words and phrases expressions related to environment which can be used in tasks, to learn usages of transition words, to express their attitudes and points of view fluently and methodically. The emotion objectives are to understand the current situation of the environment at home and abroad, cultivate students' environmental awareness in terms of values, and let them turn the awareness into action. Additionally, the ability objective is to enhance students' comprehensive skills of viewing, listening and speaking by memorizing, understanding and analyzing Ted Talks or some supplementary assignments.

3.3.2 Teaching objects

The teaching objects are 57 freshmen majoring in Computer Science and Technology of North China Electric Power University. These students have a certain foundation of English knowledge and skills, but their listening and oral English skills are poor, and there is a big gap in the English level of the class. On the other hand, the advantage of this class is that some students are relatively active, willing to communicate with teachers about problems in teaching. In view of

this, the teacher should set up reasonable and hierarchical classroom activities, try to mobilize the enthusiasm of every student, encourage them to open their mouth more, promote the cultivation of students' comprehensive language ability.

3.3.3 Teaching methods

This design mainly adopts communicative teaching method and group cooperative learning method. It always adheres to the student-centered teaching concept and carries out meaningful classroom teaching learning activities to be beneficial to increase the development of students' comprehensive language skills. In addition to this, task-based approach is interspersed throughout the course. With videos playing as the carrier, the learning design tries to build an college English class that integrates individual learning, group discussion, peer learning, teacher Q&A, teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction, so as to build a relaxed and enjoyable class that benefits both teaching and learning.

3.3.4 Teaching activities

Teaching activities refer to the classroom teaching activities as a unit. It is the basic form of school learning work. It is a complete learning system, which is composed of one link after another. The teaching activities of this design are carried out in the following aspects. To start with, ask students to have a quick reading and complete word matching exercises. Secondly, groups learn collaboratively and share their views by discussing issues related to the topic. Thirdly, complete the post-lesson exercises in the textbook based on the video. Next, if time allows, set up a fill-in-the-blank competition to enhance students' interest. Then, the most important is that the teacher should pay attention to students' difficulties and explain doubtful words and grammar. Finally, one thing the teacher needs to make clear to students is that class presentations should be without notes and the content should have some relevance to the class topic.

3.3.5 Teaching procedures

According to OBE theory, the teaching activities and learning steps of this unit are designed and shown in Table 3 on the basis of analyzing the syllabuscontent.

Table-3

Step	Procedures			Aim
	Teacher	Multimedia	Student	
Preparation	Group students	None	Sit in groups	Ready for class
1. Leading (5 min)	Ask questions	Video about China	Watch and answer	Arouse learning cognition
2. Warming up (10 min)	Vocabulary Competition	None	Finish test paper	Find key words of environment
3. Ted Talk (20 min)	Give exercises	Video about this unit's Ted Talk	Complete exercises	Lay the foundation for discussion

Step	Procedures			Aim
	Teacher	Multimedia	Student	
4. Group discussion (10 min)	Guide	Two questions	Talk and Volunteer	Brainstorm and Interact
5. Teacher's explanation (15 min)	Answer and help students	Summary	Make notes	Make up for unclear parts
6. Classroom presentation (16min=8 min for each)	Listen	Presentation	Show in class	Expand knowledge
7. Mutual evaluation (5 min)	Listen	None	Self-evaluation and peer review	Foster critical thinking
8. Conclusion (5 min)	Evaluate and summarize	None	Share gains	Reflection
9. Homework (5 min)	Online tasks	Videos On Ketangpai	Watch	Preview

3.3.6 Assessing

In this stage, teacher discusses how to evaluate students' learning achievements and evaluates students' learning effect based on the learning objectives of the unit. Firstly, evaluation content is supposed to include process evaluation and summative evaluation. Secondly, the multi-dimensional evaluations are implemented to guide students to discover, conclude, question and summarize through self-assessment and peer-assessment, so as to help students complete the transition from old knowledge to new knowledge. Thirdly, the evaluation method should include content evaluation, thinking mode evaluation, value evaluation, learning attitude and ability evaluation.

4. The reflections of application of the OBE in syllabus design

4.1 The shift of teacher's role

College English teaching in mainland of China has been in the process of reform and innovation over 70 years. And teacher's role has been changed from the traditional teacher-centered model to a scaffolder in learning-centered teaching pattern. OBE urges teachers shift their roles in teaching as soon as possible in order to get fairly good teaching effect. The role of a teacher determines the principles of the classroom organization and the teaching methods. The traditional education system is teacher-centered teaching pattern. Teacher has always been seen as a helper, a consultant facilitator. In this case, teaching and learning are in a separate relationship. The teacher is the ruler of the classroom who decides the content, mode and method of teaching. Although students have the abilities to study by themselves, teachers are indispensable as the main interactive objects and mediators in the process of constructing. The role of a teacher in the OBE teaching model has been transformed to become a mentor, a designer, a leader, an organizer and a motivator of learning interest. Teacher not only provides the best language learning environment for students, but also plays an important intermediary role in guiding, assisting, promoting and encouraging learners' language learning. On the one hand, it emphasizes the

subject status of students, and on the other hand, teacher's role is becoming diversified.

4.2 Group cooperative learning

In the case of large class teaching, students' English level is uneven. Teachers should ensure that each group should have 1 or 2 students with good level (based on the previous test results) to promote and lead the whole group to complete the task of the unit on the basis of following the voluntary and conscious principle. Just randomly putting students in a group and expecting them to work together doesn't work to come true expected cooperative learning outcomes. Only when the group members are clearly structured, the potential of cooperative learning will be developed to the maximum extent. In the small group member structure, can be divided into: group leader, speaker, observer, etc. In terms of the selection of small group leader, the rotation system is implemented. Even if the students with average English level are in charge of the rotating group leader, they should shoulder the responsibilities of overall distribution, work coordination, mutual assistance and cooperation, which is conducive to the continuous internalization of students' English knowledge and the improvement of various abilities.

4.3 Multidimensional assessment

Different from the traditional single and static assessment, the OBE emphasizes multiple assessments. The OBE has realized the multidimensional evaluations. In the process of peer-assessment, students take the initiative to appreciate each other's works and learn from each other. In the process of teacher assessment, formative evaluation is the most important method in task-based teaching. Teacher gives instant feedback on students' preparation and performance in class, which can effectively motivate and arouse students' learning interest. During the process of self-assessment, students need to evaluate themselves from the aspects of team work, class participation and assignments. In this way, guidance and incentives of the evaluations can come into play, and can promote all-round and multi-angle self-assessment. Students are

aware of their strengths and weakness. They recognize the benefits of cooperative learning and the cultivation of good study habits.

4.4. Ideology and politics in syllabus design

The learning design requires the organic combination ideological and political education with English knowledge. By integrating Chinese cultural factors into the teaching, students can not only develop their basic language skills, but also have the ability of cross-cultural communication and express Chinese cultural knowledge in English. When setting the teaching objectives, we should integrate the understanding of traditional Chinese culture and the basic national conditions of today's China into the teaching objectives. This does not mean that we should ignore the importance of western culture. While understanding western culture, comparing the differences between Chinese and Western cultures can expand students' horizons. Therefore, it is extremely critical to choose materials with great cultural differences or teaching themes with Chinese cultural content. For example, when TED Talks is played, the differences between Chinese and American environmental protection policies can be compared and analyzed. However, syllabus ideology and politics is not just the result of a long, slow process of indoctrination. The classroom design is student-centered, understands the needs of students, and plans the teaching content according to the career development planning and training objectives of students. For example, develop the values that students should possess according to their career planning. As a matter of fact, theory and practice still have big gap.

4.5 Existing problem and improvement measures

This learning design only stays at the theoretical level and has not gone through teaching practice, so there exists still a lot of problems. Firstly, the OBE concept is similar to the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) proposed by Wen Qiufang. And this syllabus design in some degree uses Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) for reference. In short, specific syllabus design can be completed not only under the guidance of one concept, but also requires multiple considerations. Secondly, in actual teaching, due to its great difference from the traditional teacher-oriented teaching model that students are familiar with, students may show that they are not familiar with classroom activities and cannot fully understand the design intention of teachers. Coupled with their oral skills are not fluent, students cannot fully understand the teacher's instructions, and the

adaptability to classroom activities needs to be improved.

5. CONCLUSION

Due to its unique perspectives and innovation, the theoretical system of OBE has attracted more and more College English teachers' attention. Under the guidance of OBE concept, this paper analyses college English course's current situation and design a syllabus, in which learning objectives can be implemented in every teaching link. Future research in the use of OBE should give more consideration to the Chinese students so as to maximize the win-win situation of teaching and learning.

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