



Outcome-Based Teaching Model: A New Way to Teach Chinese Writing as a Foreign Language and Its Positive Results

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Abstract. At present, some deep-rooted traditional doctrines and practice in teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language remain unchanged, such as the teaching objectives have been insufficiently achieved, the awareness and attention toward the student-centered and the continuous improvement of teaching are not focused adequately. In the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the college international students' writing ability remains the weakest. On the other hand, the research results of improving the quality of teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language are out of proportion compared with the teaching practice, which is obviously imbalanced. In this paper, Outcome-Based Teaching Model is developed and its positive results demonstrated. Teaching practice revealed that for senior international students and graduate students with a good foundation of Chinese, they were not willing to follow the so-called “template” to write or imitate the “model essays” because they had received sufficient training or had a lot of experience in writing in their universities or the graduate student stages. The current research and preliminary teaching achievements show that Outcome-Based Teaching Model is beneficial for the reform of the deep-rooted traditional doctrines and practice in teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language. OBTM turns the currently prevalent OBE theory into a new practical and operational teaching model, a model of transforming theory into operational method and then into practical application.

Keywords: outcome-based teaching model · teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language · college international students

1 Introduction

According to the studies and practice, despite the improvements in teaching Chinese writing as a second language, some deep-rooted traditional doctrines and practice remain unchanged: such as the teaching objectives have been insufficiently achieved, the awareness and attention toward the student-centered and the continuous improvement of teaching are not focused adequately. In the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the college international students' writing ability remains the weakest. On the other hand,

the research results of improving the quality of teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language are out of proportion compared with the teaching practice, which is obviously imbalanced. Therefore, the theoretical research and practice of teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language need to be continuously improved and developed. New and different teaching methods and models will make teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language easier to learn, more vivid and effective, thus playing an important role in improving the quality of teaching and high-level talents [1]. In order to increase the college international students' awareness and interest in writing and to further tap and improve their writing ability, the author, in conjunction with the long-term practice of teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language, puts forward Outcome-Based Teaching Model, takes instructing the college international students to participate in the First “Coconut Wind Cup” Essay Contest for College International Students of Hainan(hereinafter referred to as the Essay Contest) and the provincial-level Chinese language and talent contests as examples and demonstrates its application to better achieve the teaching objectives and continuously improve the level and quality of teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language.

2 The Concept of Outcome-Based Teaching Model and Its Relevant Theoretical Research

Outcome-Based Education (hereinafter referred to as OBE), proposed by American scholar William Spady in 1981, is considered to be the right direction and worth pursuing in education and has been widely valued and applied both nationally and internationally. In 1994, he wrote “Outcomes-Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers” and did more research into OBE [2]. In this book the three concepts are emphasized (Fig. 1). These concepts are a catalyst and improvement to traditional education [3].

Outcome-Based Teaching Model (hereinafter referred to as OBTM) is originated from OBE. OBTM proposed in this paper includes three meanings, i.e., 1) to clarify the objectives of education, teaching and curriculum; 2) to continuously optimize the process of education and teaching, applying the concept and method of outcome-based teaching and learning; 3) and to produce good results or performance that are consistent with the expected objectives. Both “objectives” and “outcomes” complement each other. OBTM is not a set of fixed model and that different teaching contexts and objectives can be taught in different ways [4].

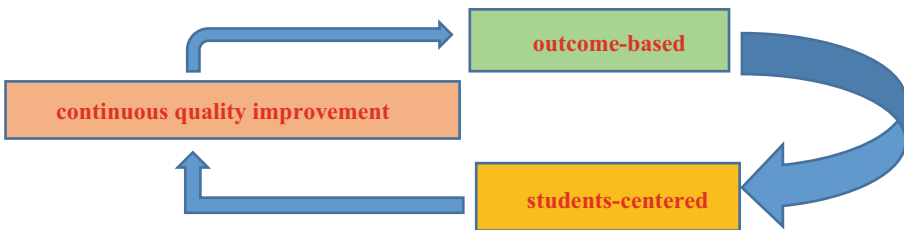


Fig. 1. The Basic Concept of OBE

Wu Yan [5] proposes to grasp the advanced concepts of the development of higher education in the world, to highlight the student-centered, to promote the transformation of teaching to “learning well”, to highlight the outcome-based, to emphasize the teaching objectives and their achievements as well as the continuous improvement of teaching. The concepts of OBE advocated by William Spady emphasize that the focus of schools should shift from the teaching content to the students, that what students learn and whether they succeed is more important than when and how they learn, and that what students learn and how well they learn, and what they are able to do are important after all. Whereas the traditional curricula and teaching focus on the past, the outcome-based approach prepares students for the future and for the inevitable constant changes in the society [6]. So, Wu Yan’s propositions are close to OBE theory advocated by William Spady.

In summary, the relevant research results at home and abroad not only provide theoretical support and reference for teachers to apply OBTM to teach Chinese writing as a foreign language in classes and instruct the college international students to participate in the contests, but also bring many useful inspirations.

3 The Application of OBTM and the Results

3.1 The Application of OBTM in the Essay Contest

In May 2018, the Department of Education of Hainan Province held the Essay Contest, with the theme of “Hainan in My Eyes”, aiming to encourage the enthusiasm of the college international students to learn Chinese, improve their Chinese writing ability, deepen their knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and Hainan Province, experience and publicize the achievements of Hainan’s reform and opening up, and promote friendly cooperation and exchange between China and the world. The Essay Contest was divided into two stages: the preliminary round at school level and the final round at provincial level. After two months of preparation, essays collection and selection, hundreds of the contestants from more than 20 countries in 11 colleges and universities in the province participated in the contest. After careful selection by each school, a total of 50 essays were recommended to participate in the provincial final, and a total of 5 first prizes, 10 s prizes, 15 third prizes and 20 prizes for the rest of the contestants. 20 excellent instructors were also awarded. The Essay Contest reflected the achievements of the education for the college international students in Hainan in recent years and achieved a complete success.

The essay “Hainan in the Eyes of Zhen Ya” [7] won the second prize in the provincial final (ranked the first among higher professional institutions) and the instructor was awarded the title of “Excellent Instructor” [8]. EVGENIYA BIRYUZOVA, the contestant (Her Chinese name is Zhen Ya), is a graduate student of the Eurasian professional communication major from the Northern (Arctic) Federal University of Russia, who came to our college in September 2017 to study Chinese.

The instructor and the contestant jointly clarify the objectives of the Essay Contest and analyze the difference between the Essay Contest and the daily writing in class
The Essay Contest requires a novel idea, a clear theme and positive thoughts, informative

and well-organized content, vivid words, fluent, beautiful and flexible sentences, good use of rhetoric and neat calligraphy. Therefore, the essay should be written in accordance with the conception of the contest, and the content of the essay should be something that readers want to know but do not know much about yet, which will inspire readers and convey new ideas. The writing methods and ideas should be new, unique, attractive and readable. In short, the Essay Contest is a comprehensive one, a test of the college international students' vision, observation, thinking, expression, and comprehensive use of Chinese language skills.

The daily writing in classes is usually practical writing, which is based on the events around the college international students, followed by analysis and imitation etc.; and its objectives include learning to use Chinese punctuation marks correctly, mastering the format of writing, using proper words, and expressing themselves smoothly and appropriately.

Obviously, there is a significant difference between the Essay Contest and daily writing in classes, and the former is obviously more difficult.

Optimizing the writing process and achieving the objectives of the Essay Contest

The essay should strive for novel ideas and distinctive themes. On April 13, 2018, at the conference celebrating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Hainan Special Economic Zone, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech and announced that the Party Central Committee decided to support the construction of a pilot free trade zone on the whole Hainan Island and support Hainan to gradually explore and steadily build it into a free trade port with Chinese characteristics. The free trade port is the highest level of opening-up in the world today, which is a major initiative that demonstrates China's determination to expand its opening-up to the outside world and actively promotes economic globalization. The "4.13 Speech" then became the focus of the whole province and the country. Therefore, writing an essay about the construction of Hainan Free Trade Port will highlight the conception of the Essay Contest because the content is new and creative, and the theme of the title "Hainan in the Eyes of Zhen Ya" is clear and interesting.

The essay is clearly written and ingeniously conceived and gives readers a panoramic view of Hainan. For examples, the essay goes from Zhen Ya's "sleep" on the plane to reaching Hainan to realize her "dream" of learning Chinese culture and language; Zhen Ya takes a ride in the "The Shuttle Time" to imagine the future of Hainan Free Trade Port, the beginning of Hainan's liberation in the past and the present in 2018. Thus, the essay has a natural and lively transition, combining reality and fiction to stimulate the readers' desire to read the whole text.

The language used in the essay is standard, authentic and vivid. For examples, the words and expressions, such as "situated", "towering", "famous", "clay", "primitive", "red", "green", "granny" etc. are used to describe the natural beauty, the landscape and the local people. The appropriate application of rhetorical expression techniques, such as "The Shuttle Time", "creeper", "grunt", "it came from afar", as well as the use of the word "green" as a double entendres, can be found in the text.

The cultural elements involved in the essay highlight the characteristics of Hainan. For examples, the blue sea and blue sky, the Five Finger Mountain, the tropical rainforest,

the characteristics of the local houses, Wenchang Chicken, fresh coconut juice, a po (the grandmother) and the Hainan dialect etc.

Although the essay is only 1,300 words long, it describes and narrates the beautiful and ecological environment of Hainan, the simple and friendly local residents, the unique Hainan food culture, the imagination of the bright future of the construction of Hainan Free Trade Port, and the great changes since the liberation of Hainan in 1950, especially since the establishment of Hainan province as a special economic zone in 1988.

The instructor and the contestant work together to continuously improve the essay against expected objectives

The assessment of the Essay Contest. The focus of assessment is on the extent to which the contestant has accomplished the objectives of the Essay Contest, with the gains of the writing process and the degree to which the objectives have been achieved as the key criteria (Table 1).

Reflecting the concept of the student-centred and focusing on what the contestant has learned, whether or not she has made progress and succeeded in the process of participation. The instructor always keeps the concept of the student-centred in mind, and takes into account the factors, such as the contestant's academic and experiential background, which would influence her writing and participation in the Essay Contest. The instructor acts as a guide and facilitator in the process of the Essay Contest, focusing on communication and interaction with the contestant, inspiring her writing ideas, fostering her creative inspiration, bringing into play her initiative and creativity [9] and encouraging her to succeed.

Sharing the joy of success, boosting confidence in writing and clarifying the direction for future development. The instructor and the contestant tackle together the challenges of the Essay Contest and share the rewards of the writing process and the joy of achieving their objectives. The contestant's confidence in writing has been boosted and future career is well established as a result of her achievement in the most difficult but important skill for the international students to master—"writing".

Table 1. The Assessment of the Essay Contest

Steps	Instruction
Summary	The instructor summarizes the merits or shortcomings of the contestant and the essay.
Affirmation	The instructor affirms and praises the contestant's excellent performance in the process of participation.
Encouragement	The instructor enthusiastically encourages the contestant's positive, serious and enterprising attitude in the process of participation and asks the contestant to maintain and carry it forward.
Direction	The instructor objectively points out the contestant's shortcomings and proposes clear, specific and feasible directions for the future development.

3.2 The Application of OBTM in the Daily Writing Classes

The 83 international students who attended the daily writing classes were undergraduate or postgraduate students from Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Thailand and Vietnam in the academic years of 2018 and 2019, most of whom had studied, worked or travelled in more than two countries (Table 2).

The final exams for the international students included written reports as well as PPT for the oral presentations. The following were the aspects that they would cover (Table 3).

Their learning outcomes and performance show positive feedback in terms of their knowledge of basic Chinese vocabulary and grammar, as well as their ability to gather materials, conceive ideas and express themselves in written reports and PPT for the oral presentations.

Table 2. The Basic Information of International Students in the Academic Years of 2018 and 2019

Dimensions	Items	Number of Students	%
Age	17–21	56	67.5%
	22–25	15	18%
	26–32	12	14.5%
Sex	Male	28	33.7%
	Female	55	66.3%
Educational Qualification	High School Students	1	1.2%
	College Students	77	92.8%
	Postgraduate Students	5	6%

Table 3. The Aspects of the Written Reports and PPT for the Oral Presentations

Categories	Contents	%
Material Culture	Chinese food and beverage comparison, tourism resources comparison, Chinese transportation and traffic conditions etc.	36.7%
Social Culture	Chinese traditional festivals and customs, Chinese people being friendly, hospitable and helpful, health and physical exercises (e.g. square dance, walking backwards etc.), campus culture, teacher-student friendship, gift-giving and treating people, campus culture, teacher-student friendship, local people's daily life (e.g. nap, holding an umbrella on a sunny day, late night snack, Hainan Daddy Tea etc.), unhealthy lifestyle behaviors etc.	39.3%
Others	Chinese music and dance, Chinese dialects, Chinese architecture, Chinese characters, local people's happy life, birth and marriage etc.	24%

3.3 The Application of OBTM in Provincial-Level Chinese Language and Talent Contests

In December 2017, the contestant won the 3rd prize in The 6th “Qiongzhou Cup” of Chinese Language and Talent Contest for College International Students of Hainan [10]. In December 2018, the contestant won the 2nd prize in The 7th “Qiongzhou Cup” of Chinese Language and Talent Contest for College International Students of Hainan [11]. The contests mentioned above are organized by the Department of Education of Hainan Province and consist of three sessions, including self-introduction in Chinese, Chinese language and talent demonstration, and cultural demonstration of the contestants’ home countries.

4 Analysis and Discussion

First, based on the application of OBTM (Fig. 2) in the Essay Contest and the provincial-level Chinese language and talent contests, as well as in the daily writing classes, it is possible to conclude that OBTM turns the currently prevalent OBE theory into a new practical and operational teaching model, a model of transforming theory into operational method and then into practical application and that it can produce good teaching results (Table 4).

Second, teaching practice shows that for senior international students and postgraduates who have a good foundation of Chinese, they are not willing to follow the so-called “template” to write or imitate the “model text” because they already have had sufficient training and experience in writing at university or postgraduate level. Their main problems remain focused on the understanding and use of difficult words and complicated grammatical rules, and their pragmatic ability and cross-cultural awareness are comparatively weak. That raises new issues for the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching Chinese writing, and indicates that the theoretical research and teaching practice need to be continuously improved and developed.

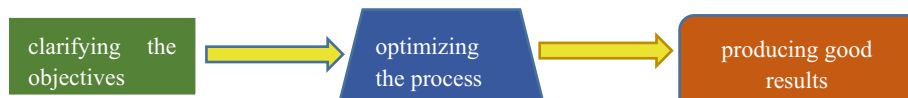


Fig. 2. The Basic Concept of OBTM

Table 4. The Analysis of the 83 the International Students’ Exam Results

Exam Results					
Grades	1 (excellent)	80–89 (good)	70–79 (average)	60–69 (fair)	<60 (poor)
Number of Students	52	20	5	5	1
%	62.7%	24.1%	6%	6%	1.2%

Third, in reality, due to the differences in the college international students' knowledge, personality, emotional control, anxiety level, behavior and attitude, and individual qualities etc., occasionally, the writing assessment would become troublesome.

5 Conclusion

The importance of teaching Chinese as a foreign language is indisputable and new and different teaching methods or models will make teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language easier to learn and more effective. OBTM has a solid theoretical framework and foundation and turns the currently prevalent OBE theory into a new practical and operational teaching model, a model of transforming theory into operational method and then into practical application. The current research and preliminary teaching achievements show that OBTM is beneficial for the reform of the deep-rooted traditional doctrines and practice in teaching Chinese writing as a foreign language. Although OBTM has certain limitations, it is a practical and useful teaching model that deserves to be learned from, applied and gradually promoted in this field.

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