An Empirical Exploration of College English Blended Teaching Mode Reform Based on OBE Concept

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Abstract. In China, college English teaching faces several challenges, for example, low student engagement and a misalignment between course instruction and undergraduate program requirements. This study introduces a systematic blended teaching model rooted in the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) concept to tackle these challenges. It specifically targets the delivery of the Comprehensive College English I and II courses, involving 121 translation and interpretation undergraduates at a private university in China. The approach integrates online and offline activities and is adaptable to eight different areas. As for result, the SPSS statistical software was employed to contrast the course outcomes of the experimental and control classes. The analysis indicated that the OBE-based blended teaching mode bolstered student engagement, enhanced their learning outcomes, and improved their self-learning, self-management, and group work skills. Moreover, it bridged the gap between course instruction and graduation prerequisites more effectively. This empirical study aims to assist EFL lecturers in understanding and implementing an innovative teaching approach that conforms to undergraduate program requirements and fosters students' competencies.

Keywords: blended teaching mode reform, college English teaching, SPSS statistics, OBE Concept

1 Introduction

Within the curriculum for students focusing on English-related subjects, College English plays a vital role. It lays the groundwork necessary for advanced major core courses in the four-year program. Nonetheless, College English faces challenges like low student engagement, a disconnect between teaching methods and the development of communication and critical thinking skills, and a misalignment between the course and related programme requirements. To address these issues, the present study aims to reform college English education using a blended approach grounded in the OBE concept.

The OBE educational approach, which centres on student outcomes and achievements, has emerged as a promising avenue for reforming college-level English education [1]. OBE distinguishes itself by starting with well-defined learning objectives and

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aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment to meet program requirements [2]. Spady [2] defines outcomes as the practical application of knowledge and understanding. that students exhibit through observable demonstrations of learning results, characterized by action verbs rather than mere cognitive processes. Despite its critics, OBE remains a prevalent approach, finding applications in diverse areas such as teaching and learning enhancement [3], educational informatization [4], and business courses[5]. In today's dynamic world, college and university students yearn for an education that transcends theoretical knowledge, equipping them with the skills essential for future job markets [6]. OBE offers a potent solution to the challenges inherent in contemporary higher education. Specifically, undergraduate students in English-related programs can derive immense benefits from this approach, as it allows educators to tailor teaching materials to their unique needs. Feedback from instructors who have integrated OBE into their courses indicates its broad applicability and success[7].

Recently, blended teaching has become a focal point of educational reform in China. By centering learners and integrating offline face-to-face interactions with online engagements, blended teaching fosters deeper and more efficient learning. This method provides students with an array of learning resources, while also emphasizing targeted guidance from educators[1].

In this research, a blended teaching reform will be conducted based on OBE concept.

2 Background and Problem Statement

The current state of EFL teaching and learning during the first college year in China is confronted with several challenges: large class sizes, an exam-centric approach, insufficient speaking practice, student motivation issues, and a lack of cultural context. To Comprehensive English course for first-year students majoring in Translation and Interpretation, we have pinpointed additional challenges beyond the ones previously highlighted. It seems that many instructors emphasize knowledge acquisition over nurturing students' professional abilities and qualities. Often, course activities are narrowly focused on language skills, neglecting the essential enhancement of critical thinking, communication, and other professional competencies.

It is widely acknowledged that first-year university students frequently encounter substantial challenges as they transition into new learning environments and grapple with varied expectations[8]. For undergraduate translation majors, the Comprehensive English course is particularly pivotal. It not only enhances language skills but also develops essential self-learning, self-management, and communication abilities. Moreover, integrating diverse activities into the curriculum can assist students in developing a robust sense of national identity and heightened awareness of cross-cultural communication, equipping them for subsequent studies.

Consequently, an urgent call for curriculum reform is evident. This study will center on two primary research questions: 1) How can the OBE education concept be integrated into Comprehensive English teaching reform? 2) What outcomes can be antic-

ipated from this experimental teaching reform, which will meld both online and offline teaching methodologies?

3 Method

This study presents empirical research focused on the teaching methods used in two courses: Comprehensive College English I and II. It involved 121 undergraduate students majoring in translation and interpretation at a private university in Southwest China. These students were categorized into two experimental groups (Classes 3 and 4) and three control groups. The experimental groups were introduced to teaching reforms grounded in the OBE concept across eight distinct aspects (refer to Figure 1). In contrast, the control groups predominantly employed traditional English teaching techniques.

The instructional methodology utilized in this research was a blended approach, integrating both online and offline pre-class activities, class activities, and post-class tasks facilitated through learning platforms. This cohesive blended strategy was applied consistently across eight identified aspects. Following two semesters of implementing this innovative teaching model, a comprehensive analysis of the course outcomes for both the experimental and control groups was conducted using SPSS statistical software.

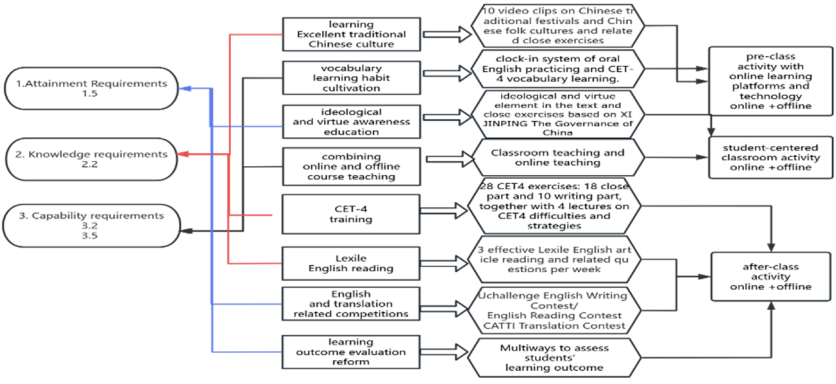

Fig. 1. OBE-based Comprehensive English teaching reform reforming activities and related undergraduate requirements

In a bid to cultivate translation practitioners over a four-year program, the School of Translation and Interpretation has designated Comprehensive English as the pilot course for its undergraduate Translation program. This reform, rooted in the OBE concept, is segmented into three core components: pre-class tasks, student-centric in-class activities, and post-class tasks, all of which leverage online learning platforms and technology. These components are manifested in eight unique aspects.

Figure 1 presents the varied and comprehensive resources employed in this teaching reform, encompassing videos, audio, online reading materials, tests, contests, and

lectures. These resources are bolstered by efficient platforms and software, including the Lexile English reading platform, the WeChat app, and the Chaoxing learning and teaching platform. Each activity is aligned with a specific undergraduate program objective, as denoted by distinct color lines in the figure. The activities are segmented into pre-class, in-class, and post-class phases of the teaching and learning journey.

4 Findings and Discussion

This part offers a comprehensive overview of the learning outcomes attained through the analysis of statistical data derived from the Chaoxing learning and teaching platform, in conjunction with SPSS analytics of students' scores. The following paragraphs briefly touch on these two sources of data.

For SPSS analysis, the first set of data encompasses students' semester examination scores for the two courses. The examination structure and score distributions are consistent, with the only distinction being that the reading comprehension section in Comprehensive English II presents a slightly higher level of difficulty. The second set of data was derived from the scores on various components of the three-stage tests, which included translation, cloze tests, writing, listening, and reading comprehension.

4.1 Results and Analysis of Chaoxing Platform Data

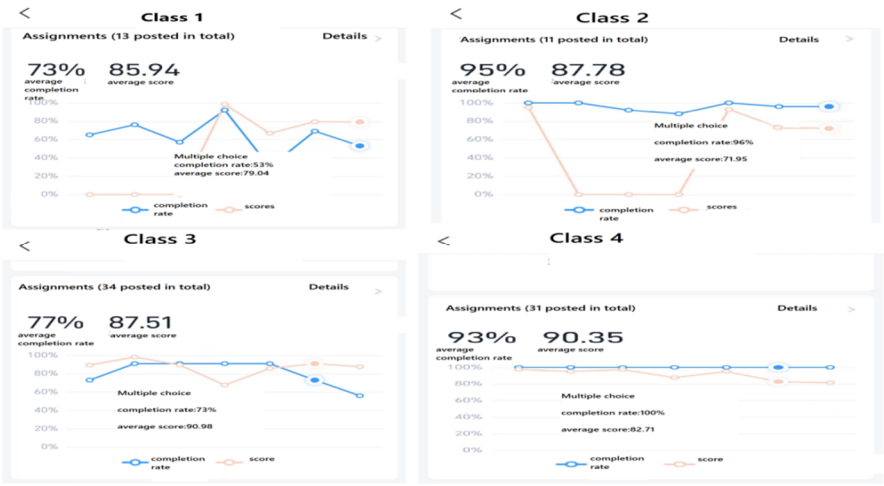

Fig. 2. Statistic results of assignments from Chaoxing application

This parts reveals the results of Chaoxing platform and gives analysis. Figure 2. presents the statistical results of assignments from Chaoxing, a learning platform commonly used in Chinese universities. It details the assignments for different classes. Control Classes 1 and 2 have 13 and 11 assignments, respectively, primarily composed of textbook exercises. On the other hand, Experimental Classes 3 and 4 have 34 and 31

assignments, respectively, encompassing a variety of types, such as video-watching, cloze exercises, reading and opinion pieces, multiple-choice questions, free discussions, and more. All these exercises correlate directly with the eight activities outlined in the methodology section. As illustrated in the figure, even with the increased number of assignments, both experimental classes boast notably higher scores (87.51 for Class 3 and 90.35 for Class 4) in comparison to the control classes.

4.2 Results and SPSS Analysis of Test Data

This section presents the results and discussion.

4.2.1 SPSS Analysis of Semester Examination Scores.

Table 1. Data analysis of semester examination scores

Comprehensive English I		
N	valid	118
	invalid	4
Mean		57.0593
Median		58.0000
mode		58.00
S.D.		9.63083
ANOVA		92.753
Min.		23.00
Max.		83.50
Comprehensive English II		
N	valid	121
	invalid	1
Mean		61.9091
Median		62.0000
mode		62.00
S.D.		9.47892
ANOVA		89.850
Min.		42.00
Max.		83.00

Table 1 presents the results of semester examinations for Comprehensive English. In Comprehensive English I, 118 students participated, achieving a mean score of 57.0593. The most common score was 58, with scores ranging from 23.00 to 83.50. In Comprehensive English II, 121 students participated, achieving a mean score of 61.9091. The most common score was 62.00, with scores ranging from 42.00 to 83.00. These results indicate that students performed better in Comprehensive English II in terms of mean, minimum, and mode scores, even with the slightly more challenging content. Specifically, 4.9% of students scored 58 in Comprehensive English I, while

6.6% scored 62.00 in Comprehensive English II. These findings suggest that adopting a teaching approach guided by the OBE concept could produce even better results. Overall, the data shows a marked improvement in students' English proficiency after two semesters.

Following the completion of two semesters in the reformed practice, students in the control classes demonstrated significant advancements across several areas, such as English speaking, writing, and information retrieval. The results indicate that their performance in semester exams was notably superior. Remarkably, in the control classes, nearly all students passed CET4 (College English Test Band 4). Additionally, these students excelled in the CATTI (China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters) translation contest, clinching numerous top-tier awards, which underscores students' good English proficiency.

4.2.2 SPSS Analysis of students' scores in tests during semesters.

We present a detailed analysis of the data collected from preliminary and staged tests conducted over two semesters in this subsection. The focus lies on the blended reforming outcomes under the guidance of OBE concept. To gather data, we administered two tests: an initial test in the first month of students' first semester, and a final test after the two-semester reform. To derive a comprehensive understanding, the scores are collected from every part of these tests. What follows are the results and discussion pertaining to the listening component.

Table 2. Description of listening part.

Preliminary test: listening part								
	N	mean	S.D.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		Min.	Max.
					lower limit	upper limit		
1	26	10.38	4.129	.810	8.72	12.05	1	21
2	25	8.52	2.600	.520	7.45	9.59	3	14
3	23	11.22	3.813	.795	9.57	12.87	4	21
4	21	10.19	2.482	.542	9.06	11.32	7	18
5	26	8.65	3.322	.651	7.31	10.00	4	16
Total	121	9.75	3.465	.315	9.13	10.38	1	21
Final test: listening part								
	N	mean	S.D.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		Min.	Max.
					lower limit	upper limit		
1	26	11.27	4.754	.932	9.35	13.19	5	22
2	24	10.29	3.458	.706	8.83	11.75	5	16
3	23	15.26	3.558	.742	13.72	16.80	8	21
4	21	12.48	4.686	1.023	10.34	14.61	6	24
5	24	12.50	5.056	1.032	10.36	14.64	5	25
Total	118	12.31	4.598	.423	11.48	13.15	5	25

The data outlined in Table 2 reveals noticeable disparities in the listening section scores among various classes during the first staged examination. Experimental Class 3 secured the highest score, whereas control Class 2 lagged behind. However, by the final test, all classes, including Classes 2, 3, 4, and 5, showed marked improvement in their scores. Class 3 exhibited the most substantial growth, with its mean score rising to 15.26 from 11.22, an ascent of over 3 points. It's evident that both the lowest and highest scores for the listening section in each class have improved.

5 Conclusion

We examined students' grades in the semester exams for Comprehensive English I and Comprehensive English II, as well as the scores in the listening part. For semester exams, the average scores for Comprehensive English increased, with an average rise of 5.85 points in the experimental class. Similarly, scores in the listening part indicate remarkable enhancement, which may suggest the pivotal role of the effectiveness of the course activities and blended teaching approach. This course teaching reform research proves the effective guidance of OBE concept and aligns the course design and instructions with the requirements in the Translation and Interpretation Major undergraduate program. It offers students avenues to hone their language skills and critical thinking capability and appreciate and champion China's traditional culture.

The OBE teaching methodology has proven to be an effective strategy for overhauling comprehensive English education in colleges. By integrating a blended teaching method that merges online and offline content, the reverse design approach has fostered enhanced student engagement and involvement. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the study's limitations. Implementing this method might encounter obstacles, such as student attitudes and teacher competencies, which could influence the program's overall efficacy. For a seamless transition to the modern educational paradigm, students need to welcome and adjust to this innovative learning concept, while educators should identify and address the inherent challenges. Furthermore, it is vital to pursue additional research and practical applications to gather invaluable insights and expertise in employing the OBE teaching methodology to revamp college English education.

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