

Implementing a Blended Oral English Instruction Model in Chinese Universities: An Outcome-Based Education Approach

Huilan Zhang, Ying Hong, Jiayao Xu

Nanchang Institute of Technology, Nanchang 330044, China

Abstract: As globalization accelerates, the demand for proficient oral English skills among Chinese university students has surged, but persistent challenges in oral English education, such as low student engagement, limited opportunities for authentic interaction, and reliance on traditional assessment methods, continue to impede effective learning. This study proposes a blended instructional model grounded in Outcome-Based Education (OBE) principles, aiming to transition from teacher-centered approaches to student-centered learning and enhance oral English education in Chinese universities. Through an exploration of how to effectively implement blended oral English instruction under the OBE framework, this study seeks to address the limitations of traditional methods, improve students' oral communication skills, and provide some insights for educators and researchers in the field of language education.

Keywords: Outcome-based education (OBE); Blended learning; Oral English instruction; Student-centered approach

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, English education in Chinese universities plays a crucial role in preparing students for global communication and career advancement. Chinese higher education institutions have been making great efforts to improve students' English proficiency. However, oral English instruction has long been constrained by traditional teaching approaches that prioritize grammar and vocabulary over practical communication skills, resulting in a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical communication abilities. In many universities, a teacher-centered pedagogy, textbook-based instruction, and standardized assessment have limited students' opportunities for authentic oral communication practice. This results in graduates who, despite years of English learning, struggle with real-life communication in international settings.

Against this backdrop, the introduction of blended learning—which integrates online and offline teaching methods—offers a potential solution by providing interactive and flexible learning environments. And outcome-based Education (OBE) provides a suitable framework for achieving these objectives by aligning teaching, curriculum, and assessment with clearly defined learning outcomes.

While international research on OBE and blended learning is abundant, few studies have explored their integration to address the specific challenges in oral English teaching (Asim et al., 2021). This article seeks to fill this gap by proposing a blended oral English instruction model based OBE principles. By aligning teaching, curriculum, and assessment with specific learning outcomes, this model aims to create a student-centered approach that enhances oral communication skills and prepares students for real-world interactions.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 OBE Principles and Application in Language Teaching

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a student-centered instructional model that focuses on achieving clearly defined learning outcomes. Proposed by Spady (1994), Outcome-Based Education “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”. Boschee and Baron (1994) defines OBE as “a student-centered, results-oriented design based on the belief that all individuals can learn”. He argues that OBE is “a commitment to the success of every learner, a philosophy that focuses educational choices on the needs of each learner, and a process for continuous improvement”. It's obvious that this approach shifts the focus from teaching to learning, ensuring that students attain the desired competencies.

The key principles of OBE include clarity of focus on culminating exit outcomes of significance, expanded opportunity and support for learning success, high expectations for all to succeed, and design down from ultimate, culminating outcomes (Spady, 1994). Shen and Locke

(2016) emphasize that OBE is not merely an educational philosophy but also a practical framework that addresses the fundamental questions of “What kind of individuals to cultivate, how, and for whom” in Chinese education. In language teaching, OBE enables educators to design curricula and assessments that align with students’ learning needs and societal expectations, fostering practical language abilities and measurable learning outcomes (Al-Saqqaf, 2023).

2.2 Blended Learning Approach and Its Advantages

As stated by Garrison and Vaughan (2008), blended learning is “the organic integration of thoughtfully selected and complementary face-to-face and online approaches and technologies”. Singh and Reed (2001) defined blended learning as a combination of different delivery methods that “focus on optimizing achievement of learning objectives by applying the ‘right’ learning technologies to match the ‘right’ personal learning style to transfer the ‘right’ skills to the ‘right’ person at the ‘right’ time”. This concept was introduced to China by Professor Kekang He (2005), who highlighted its potential to merge the strengths of traditional and online teaching, fostering both teacher guidance and student autonomy.

There are manifold advantages of blended learning in oral English instruction. To begin with, its flexibility allows students to access learning materials at their own pace and convenience. Moreover, it provides authentic practice opportunities through multimedia resources, virtual exchanges, and AI-assisted tools. In addition, by enabling teachers to monitor progress and provide targeted feedback, blended learning facilitates personalized learning. Lastly, the integration of interactive and dynamic elements enhances student engagement, making the learning experience more stimulating and effective for a diverse range of learners.

2.3 Integration of OBE and Blended Learning in Oral English Instruction

Traditional oral English courses in Chinese universities often fail to address students’ individual learning needs, provide sufficient opportunities for authentic practice, or align assessment with real-world communication skills. However, a blended learning model that follows OBE principles can bring about a more effective teaching and learning experience. OBE provides a clear framework for defining and assessing learning outcomes, while blended learning offers the online and offline means to achieve these outcomes. For instance, educators can use OBE principles to design specific learning outcomes for oral English instruction, such as the ability to communicate effectively in different situations, and use blended learning to provide students with a variety of learning resources and activities, ranging from online video lectures, face-to-face group discussions, and role-plays, to help students achieve these goals.

This integration also facilitates more holistic assessment. By combining online quizzes, peer feedback, and performance-based evaluations, educators can comprehensively measure students’ oral proficiency. Together, OBE and blended learning are likely to create a student-centered environment that promotes the development of students’ practical communication abilities (Huiling, 2024).

3. Limitations of Traditional Oral English Instruction in Chinese Universities

3.1 Teacher-Centered Approaches

Traditional oral English instruction in Chinese universities is predominantly teacher-centered, with educators delivering lectures while students passively absorb information. This approach limits opportunities for active participation and hinders the development of communicative competence. As a result, students often lack the confidence and motivation to engage in real-world English conversations.

3.2 Lack of Authentic Practice

Another prominent drawback of traditional methods is the scarcity of authentic language practice. In Chinese universities, oral English instruction often revolves around textbook content rather than spontaneous conversation, leaving students ill-prepared for real-life interactions. Without exposure to native speakers or immersive language environments, students tend to be struggling in oral fluency and cultural awareness.

3.3 Assessment Issues

Traditional assessments, which prioritize grammar and pronunciation over interactive communication, fail to accurately measure students’ oral proficiency. In addition, standardized tests and rote memorization do not reflect students’ ability to communicate effectively in diverse contexts, undermining the goals of oral English instruction.

These limitations underscore the need for an innovative approach that aligns instruction with real-world communication skills. And that calls for an OBE-driven blended learning model that addresses these challenges by providing structured, student-centered learning experiences which emphasize practical outcomes.

4. Designing a Blended Oral English Instruction Model Based on the OBE Concept

4.1 Defining Learning Outcomes

The first step in designing the blended oral English instruction model based on the OBE concept is to establish clear and measurable

learning outcomes. When setting learning outcomes in oral English teaching, teachers need to consider students' year of study and academic levels to ensure effective language acquisition and skill development, aligning the curriculum with their linguistic proficiency and communication needs. For first-year students, the primary goal is to enhance their ability to engage in real-life conversations by focusing on practical English expressions used in everyday scenarios. This can help students develop confidence and fluency in spoken communication, enabling them to express themselves naturally in English. Second-year and more advanced students are supposed to learn public speaking and debate skills beyond basic communication. At this stage, teachers can teach students speech organization, argumentation techniques, and critical thinking strategies, helping them articulate their viewpoints logically and persuasively.

4.2 Integrating Online and Offline Materials

As technology advances by leaps and bounds, education is embracing even more opportunities and promises. To enhance the effectiveness of oral English teaching, educators can fully combine digital tools with traditional classroom materials to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience for students and cater to their diverse needs. In the online phase, teachers can disseminate preview materials, post online exercises, and incorporate multimedia content such as TED Talks, news broadcasts, and online video lectures for students. Guidance and support to students, such as answering students' questions, providing feedback on their assignments, and organizing online discussions can also be offered through online platforms. In the offline classrooms, teachers can design group discussions, role-play activities, oral presentations, games, speeches and debates to engage students in active learning and help them develop their oral communication skills. This strategic integration of online flexibility with offline structure can create a dynamic and immersive learning environment, which not only strengthens students' linguistic competence but also fosters independent learning, equipping them with the skills to communicate confidently in both academic and professional settings.

4.3 Assessing Learning Outcomes

Assessment is an important part of the OBE approach to ensure that students achieve the intended learning objectives. In the blended oral English instruction, a comprehensive assessment framework should integrate both online and offline evaluation methods, providing a well-rounded measure of students' language proficiency. Online assessment such as quizzes, assignments, and discussions allow instructors to evaluate students' comprehension of course content and their ability to communicate effectively in digital environments. Offline assessment includes oral presentations, role-plays, and interviews to assess students' oral English proficiency in real-world contexts. When employing both online and offline assessment strategies, educators can gain a more holistic understanding of students' performance and progress to ensure that they develop the necessary linguistic and communication skills.

5. Conclusion

The OBE concept, characterized by outcome-orientation, student-centeredness, and continuous improvement, offers an effective framework for revolutionizing oral English instruction in Chinese universities. This study underscores the potential of an OBE-driven blended learning model to address the limitations of traditional methods by fostering a student-centered environment that enhances oral communication skills. As technology continues to reshape language education, adopting a blended learning approach can not only help institutions adapt to evolving pedagogical demands but also equip students with the linguistic competencies required for academic success, professional advancement, and intercultural communication.

References

- [1] Al-Saqqaf, M. A. B. (2023). Inclination of Teachers to Implement Outcome-based Education in English Courses in Saudi Universities. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(8), 168-168.
- [2] Asim, H. M., Vaz, A., Ahmed, A., & Sadiq, S. (2021). A Review on Outcome Based Education and Factors That Impact Student Learning Outcomes in Tertiary Education System. *International Education Studies*, 14(2), 1-11.
- [3] Boschee, F., & Baron, M. A. (1994). OBE: Some Answers for the Uninitiated. *The Clearing House*, 67(4), 193-196.
- [4] Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2008). *Blended Learning in Higher Education: Framework, Principles, and Guidelines*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [5] Huiling, W. (2024). Constructing a Blended Oral English Teaching Model based on the OBE Concept. *English Square*, (30):94-97.
- [6] Kekang, H. (2005). The New Development of Educational Technology Theory from the Perspective of Blending Learning. *Journal of National Academy of Education Administration*, (09), 37-48+79.
- [7] Shen, T., & Locke, S. (2016). On the Concept of Outcome-based Education. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 10(5), 47-51.

- [8] Spady, W. G. (1994). *Outcome-Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers*. American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209 (Stock No. 21-00488; \$18.95 plus postage).
-

About the author:

1. Huilan Zhang, December 1998, Female, Han Ethnicity, Teaching Assistant at Nanchang Institute of Technology, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China 330044; Master's Degree, Master of Translation and Interpreting; Research Fields: Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Translation Theory and Practice.
2. Ying Hong, October 1987, Female, Han Ethnicity, Lecturer at Nanchang Institute of Technology, Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province, China 330013; Master's Degree, Research Field: English Teaching.
3. Jiayao Xu, April 2004, Female, Han Ethnicity, Undergraduate College Student at Nanchang Institute of Technology, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China 330044; Research Field: Translation and Communication.