

Research on the Optimization of University English Course Competency Assessment Based on the OBE Concept

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the optimization strategies for competency assessment in university English courses based on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) philosophy. The paper begins by providing a detailed overview of the basic concepts and characteristics of the OBE educational philosophy. Subsequently, it analyzes the current status and issues of competency assessment in university English courses through literature review. Finally, the paper proposes an optimization plan for competency assessment in university English courses based on the OBE philosophy, with the expectation of effectively enhancing students' English application abilities and the overall quality of teaching.

Keywords

OBE Philosophy, University English Curriculum, Competency Assessment, Optimization Research

1. Introduction

With the continuous advancement of globalization, English, as a crucial tool for international communication, has become increasingly prominent in educational status. Against this backdrop, university English courses, as an integral part of higher education, directly affect the competitiveness of students' future careers. However, existing research indicates that current assessment methods in university English courses suffer from issues such as singular evaluation methods, one-sided evaluation content, and neglect of students' personalized development. These problems limit the comprehensive development of students' English abilities and the cultivation of practical application skills.

In response to these issues, this paper proposes to explore optimization strategies

for competency assessment in university English courses based on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) philosophy. The OBE philosophy emphasizes the centrality of students' learning outcomes, ensuring that students achieve the intended learning objectives through backward design of teaching activities and evaluation mechanisms. This paper aims to propose a systematic set of optimization strategies by deeply analyzing the application of the OBE philosophy in university English teaching, with the expectation of enhancing teaching quality and promoting the comprehensive development of students' English application abilities.

This approach provides students with a more comprehensive, fair, and personalized learning evaluation system, thereby better stimulating students' learning potential and cultivating their English abilities to meet the demands of future society.

2. Overview of the OBE Educational Philosophy

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a contemporary teaching paradigm that centers on student learning outcomes, emphasizing the close integration of educational objectives with students' actual capabilities. Originating from educational reforms in the 20th century, the OBE philosophy has been widely adopted in global education systems, particularly in vocational training and higher education. The OBE philosophy emphasizes the cultivation of students' learning outcomes and abilities, focusing particularly on their comprehensive qualities and problem-solving skills (Li, 2023).

The OBE philosophy posits that the design and implementation of teaching activities should be oriented towards clear learning outcomes. This means that the starting point of teaching is the desired goals for students, and the endpoint is the assessment of whether these goals have been achieved. For instance, in a university English course, this might mean that students are able to deliver fluent English speeches and write effectively by the end of the course.

The OBE philosophy emphasizes respecting students' individual differences and encourages them to learn according to their interests, abilities, and learning styles. This personalized approach helps to foster students' autonomous learning abilities and innovative thinking, thereby stimulating their learning potential.

By establishing effective feedback mechanisms, the OBE philosophy advocates for continuous assessment and reflection on the teaching process and student learning outcomes. This assessment not only focuses on students' knowledge acquisition but also includes their skill application and problem-solving abilities, ensuring the continuous improvement of teaching quality. These approaches help students achieve a higher level of proficiency in language use and lay a solid foundation for their future academic and professional careers.

3. Analysis of the Current Status of Competency Assessment in University English Courses

The competency assessment system in current university English teaching faces a

series of challenges that, to some extent, limit the comprehensive development of students' English abilities.

1) Singularity of Assessment Methods

The current assessment system overly relies on traditional written exams, which often fail to comprehensively evaluate students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Typically, courses still use written exams as the primary method of evaluation.

2) One-Sidedness of Assessment Content

The assessment system tends to focus on the mastery of language knowledge while neglecting the application of language in real contexts. This bias leads to a situation where students may perform well in theoretical exams but struggle to effectively use English in actual communication.

3) Neglect of Personalized Development

The existing assessment system does not fully consider the individual differences among students, employing a "one-size-fits-all" evaluation standard, which overlooks the varying learning styles and ability levels of students.

4) Inadequacy of Feedback Mechanisms

Both students and teachers commonly report that the existing feedback mechanisms are not timely or effective enough. This deficiency makes it difficult for students to understand their learning progress in a timely manner, and it also hinders teachers from adjusting their teaching strategies based on students' learning situations.

4. Optimization Plan for Competency Assessment in University English Courses Based on the OBE Philosophy

In response to the issues present in the current competency assessment of university English courses, this paper proposes the following optimization plan aimed at achieving a more comprehensive, fair, and effective evaluation system.

1) Clarify Teaching Objectives

Guided by the OBE philosophy, we can deduce the overall teaching objectives and competency goals of the course in reverse, and construct a student-centered university English classroom (Liu, 2023).

Establish Specific and Measurable Learning Objectives: Based on the requirements of the university English curriculum, define clear goals for language proficiency and cultural literacy that students should achieve upon course completion. These objectives should be clear, quantifiable, and assessable to provide targeted guidance and assessment during the teaching process.

Student-Centered Approach: Ensure that the setting of teaching objectives fully considers the actual needs and learning characteristics of students, paying attention to individual differences and providing suitable learning objectives for students at different levels.

2) Define Learning Outcomes and Stimulate Student Interest

The OBE philosophy emphasizes learning outcomes as the guiding principle,

requiring teachers to first clarify the learning objectives students should achieve when designing teaching activities. These objectives should be specific, measurable, and closely related to students' future learning, work, and life. When students know clearly which practical skills they will master through learning, their interest and motivation in learning will be significantly enhanced, leading to more active participation in classroom interactions.

Integrate Ideological and Political Elements: The university has integrated ideological and political elements into the English curriculum, such as cultivating students' national identity and sense of social responsibility through translating English texts related to the "Belt and Road" initiative and reading stories of exemplary figures.

By implementing these measures, the optimization plan aims to address the existing problems in the competency assessment of university English courses, providing students with a more comprehensive, fair, and personalized learning evaluation system. This will better stimulate students' learning potential and equip them with the English capabilities needed for future societal demands.

5. Designing Interactive Teaching Tasks

In the selection of teaching content, priority should be given to language knowledge and skills that are closely related to students' future learning, work, and life, such as daily communication, workplace communication, and academic writing.

Adopting problem-oriented teaching methods, teachers can design challenging and thought-provoking questions to guide students in actively exploring, thinking, and solving problems, thereby improving their language application abilities and thinking skills.

To promote classroom interaction among students, teachers can design a series of interactive teaching tasks based on the OBE philosophy. These tasks can take the form of group discussions, role-playing, case analyses, project collaborations, etc., aiming to let students solve problems together through mutual communication, cooperation, and discussion, achieving learning objectives. For instance, when teaching English expressions related to the "Belt and Road" initiative, teachers can organize group discussions for students to share their understanding and views on the initiative and simulate related scenarios through role-playing, thereby enhancing students' language use and cross-cultural communication skills in practice.

6. Encouraging Autonomous Inquiry and Collaborative Learning

The OBE educational philosophy advocates for an outcomes-oriented approach, and its integration into the evaluation mechanism of university English teaching helps ensure the objectivity and accuracy of university English assessments (Yu, 2023).

OBE encourages students to achieve learning objectives through autonomous inquiry and collaborative learning. In university English classrooms, teachers can guide students to actively explore English learning resources and methods, such as using online resources for self-study, participating in English corners or English clubs for language practice, etc. At the same time, teachers can also organize collaborative learning, promoting student interaction and communication through group work, mutual evaluation of learning outcomes, and other methods. This model of autonomous inquiry and collaborative learning not only improves students' learning efficiency and effectiveness but also cultivates their autonomous learning abilities and team spirit.

7. Establishing an Effective Feedback Mechanism

In the evaluation of university English teaching, there are issues such as singular criteria, a single evaluation entity, insufficient feedback, and the absence of ideological and political education. To address these problems, the following improvement measures can be taken:

1) Enrich Evaluation Criteria: Diversify the standards used to assess student performance to include a broader range of skills and competencies, such as communicative abilities, cultural understanding, and critical thinking.

2) Diversify Evaluation Entities: Involve multiple stakeholders in the evaluation process, such as peers, self-assessment by students, and external evaluators, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of student performance.

3) Strengthen Evaluation Feedback: Ensure that feedback is provided in a timely and constructive manner to help students understand their progress and areas for improvement. This can also guide teachers in adjusting their teaching methods to better meet student needs.

4) Enhance Ideological and Political Education Evaluation: Integrate the assessment of students' understanding and application of ideological and political concepts within the curriculum. This can be achieved by evaluating their ability to discuss and analyze societal issues within the context of English language studies.

By implementing these measures, the evaluation process in university English teaching can become more comprehensive, fair, and effective, leading to a more holistic educational experience that prepares students not only linguistically but also intellectually and ethically for their future roles in society.

Under the OBE philosophy, teachers need to establish an effective feedback mechanism to promptly understand students' learning situations and problems, and adjust teaching strategies and methods accordingly. This feedback mechanism should not be limited to one-way teacher evaluation but also include peer evaluation and self-evaluation among students. Through peer and self-evaluation, students can more objectively understand their learning status and deficiencies, thereby improving their learning methods and enhancing learning outcomes. At the same time, teachers can also adjust teaching content and methods based on feedback results to better meet students' learning needs and improve teaching

quality.

8. Enhancing Interaction with Modern Technological Means

With the development of technology, modern technological means provide more possibilities for interaction in university English classrooms. Teachers can use multimedia, the internet, and other modern technological means to enrich teaching methods and resources, improving teaching effectiveness. For example, teachers can use online teaching platforms to organize online discussions and collaborative document editing; use virtual reality technology to simulate real-life scenarios for language practice; and use big data and artificial intelligence to analyze students' learning data, providing them with personalized learning suggestions and feedback. The use of these technological means not only enhances the fun and effectiveness of classroom interaction but also increases students' interest and participation.

The OBE philosophy effectively promotes the interactivity and effectiveness of university English classrooms by clarifying learning outcomes, designing interactive teaching tasks, encouraging autonomous inquiry and collaborative learning, establishing effective feedback mechanisms, and utilizing modern technological means to enhance interaction.

9. Continuous Assessment and Feedback

Teachers cannot judge students' learning outcomes based solely on a single test paper; instead, they should focus on combining formative and summative assessments. To provide objective evaluations of students, the use of information technology is indispensable (Duan, 2019).

Diversified Assessment Methods: Employ a variety of assessment methods (such as classroom performance, homework, quizzes, project reports, etc.) to conduct a comprehensive and objective evaluation of student learning outcomes.

Timely Feedback: Provide timely feedback to students based on assessment results, helping them understand their learning status and identify areas for improvement. At the same time, teachers should also adjust their teaching strategies according to feedback results to ensure the achievement of teaching objectives.

10. Strengthening Teacher Training

The OBE philosophy starts with a clear course objective that emphasizes learning outcomes, which not only provides more room for teachers and students to perform but also helps to truly shift the focus of education from teacher-centered to learner-centered. This approach achieves a high degree of unity between the overall quality and systematic optimization of the course, offering a new perspective and pathway for constructing an efficient, systematic, rational, and diverse university English curriculum system (Cheng, 2023).

Enhancing Teacher Competence: Strengthen training for university English

teachers to improve their professional quality and teaching abilities, enabling them to better understand and apply the OBE philosophy.

Promoting the OBE Philosophy: Organize seminars, workshops, and other activities to promote the OBE philosophy among teachers, enhancing their sense of identification and ability to execute it effectively.

By implementing these strategies, the OBE philosophy can further enhance the effectiveness of university English courses. Continuous assessment and timely feedback ensure that students are aware of their progress and areas for improvement, while teacher training ensures that educators are equipped with the necessary skills and understanding to facilitate this process. This holistic approach not only benefits students by providing them with a clear path to success but also enriches the teaching environment by fostering a community of practice that is committed to ongoing improvement and innovation in education.

11. Conclusion

The application of the OBE educational philosophy in university English courses contributes to the cultivation of high-quality talents with an international perspective and cross-cultural communication abilities. Research on the optimization of competency assessment in university English courses based on the OBE philosophy is an important way to enhance teaching quality and promote the comprehensive development of students. By clarifying learning outcomes, reverse designing teaching activities, establishing feedback mechanisms, and integrating ideological and political elements, existing problems, the competency assessment of university English courses can be effectively addressed.

In the future, we should continue to conduct in-depth research and promote the application of the OBE philosophy. In summary, the specific application of the OBE philosophy in university English classrooms requires concerted efforts in clarifying teaching objectives, optimizing teaching content, reforming teaching methods, continuous assessment and feedback, and strengthening teacher training. The implementation of these measures can effectively improve the quality and effectiveness of university English teaching and cultivate students' language application abilities and comprehensive qualities.

The integration of the OBE philosophy into university English education signifies a shift towards a more student-centered approach that values the achievement of tangible learning outcomes. It emphasizes the importance of aligning teaching practices with real-world applications and the development of skills that are relevant to students' future success. As we look ahead, the continuous refinement and expansion of OBE-based strategies will be crucial in ensuring that university English courses remain dynamic, relevant, and effective in preparing students for the global stage.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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