

# The Integration of Outcome-Based Education Theory into the Teaching of Business English Reading Course

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents an OBE-based teaching model for Business English Reading courses, emphasizing outcome definition, strategy optimization, and improved assessments. Findings show that this approach enhances students' comprehension and self-directed learning. It analyzes the current situation of Business English Reading courses in terms of objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment systems. Under the guidance of OBE theory, the document proposes an application framework for Business English Reading courses, including clarification and achievement strategies of teaching objectives, specific implementation measures, and an assessment and feedback mechanism. Challenges and future research directions are also discussed.

**Keywords:** OBE, Business English Reading, Teaching Model, Reform, Self-Directed Learning

## INTRODUCTION

### Research Background

With the deepening of global economic integration, Business English has become a crucial tool for cross-cultural communication. However, traditional teaching methods emphasize grammar and vocabulary while overlooking practical language use in real-world contexts. Therefore, integrating Outcome-Based Education (OBE) into Business English reading instruction is essential. The OBE model not only emphasizes the final learning outcomes of students but also advocates that the design and assessment of teaching activities should closely revolve around these outcomes, aiming to comprehensively enhance students' business communication skills rather than merely staying at the superficial level of language knowledge acquisition (Smith, 2018). The introduction of this model prompts teachers to shift from "what to teach" to "how to teach to achieve certain outcomes," thereby more effectively promoting the overall development of students.

The core of OBE lies in "defining clear learning outcomes," which are not abstract concepts or theories but are concretely defined through a series of specific tasks that students can successfully complete (Spady, 1994). In the practice of Business English reading instruction, these learning outcomes may encompass multiple dimensions, such as deeply understanding complex business reports, accurately analyzing market research data, and independently writing structured and persuasive business proposals. These tasks not only test students' language proficiency but also involve the comprehensive assessment of critical thinking, information integration, and innovation capabilities (Jones & Im, 2010). Therefore, when designing teaching plans, teachers need to first clarify these specific learning outcomes and, based on them, select teaching content, design teaching activities, and formulate assessment standards to ensure that every aspect effectively facilitates students in achieving the established learning objectives.

### Research Purpose

This study integrates Outcome-Based Education (OBE) theory into Business English Reading instruction to enhance students' reading comprehension and independent learning. The objectives are:

1. To identify key challenges in current teaching practices and provide directions for reform.
2. To propose a novel OBE-based teaching model, including learning outcomes, instructional design, and

assessment frameworks.

3. To validate the model's effectiveness through empirical research and provide guidelines for teaching reform.

## Significance of the Study

This study not only contributes to enhancing the instructional quality of the Business English Reading course but also serves as a benchmark for the teaching reform of other business-related English courses. In particular, the significance of this study resides in:

Sparking innovation in the teaching model of the Business English Reading course. By embedding the OBE theory, this study strives to transcend traditional teaching paradigms and forge a new student-centered, outcome-focused teaching model that fosters students' learning enthusiasm and autonomous learning skills.

Elevating the instructional effectiveness of the Business English Reading course. The OBE-based teaching model underscores the clarity and practicality of learning outcomes. Through rigorous teaching strategies and a holistic assessment system, it ensures that students attain the designated learning outcomes, thereby augmenting instructional effectiveness.

Offering a reference point for the teaching reform of other business-related English courses. This study applies the OBE theory to the teaching reform of the Business English Reading course and has yielded notable results. This successful endeavor can provide invaluable insights and a blueprint for the teaching reform of other business-related English courses.

By meticulously examining the existing issues in the teaching of the Business English Reading course, this paper proposes a teaching design approach anchored in the OBE theory. This approach prioritizes students, emphasizes outcome-orientation, and underscores continuous improvement. It endeavors to construct a student-centered, outcome-focused teaching model for the Business English Reading course through clearly defined learning outcomes, engaging teaching methodologies, diverse instructional materials, and a comprehensive teaching assessment system. The findings indicate that the OBE-based teaching model can markedly improve students' business English reading skills, bolster their autonomous learning abilities, and lay a solid groundwork for their future academic pursuits and career advancements. This study not only furnishes a theoretical foundation and practical guidance for the reform of the Business English Reading course but also offers pertinent insights for the reform of other business-related English courses.

## OVERVIEW OF OBE THEORY

### Origin and Development of OBE Theory

OBE (Outcome-Based Education) theory, which emphasizes education centered on students and focuses on their learning outcomes, originated in the American educational community in the 1980s and rapidly gained promotion and application worldwide (Spady, 1994). The core idea of this theory is that education should prioritize students, emphasize the close connection between the educational process and student learning outcomes (William & Black, 1998). This shift in focus from teaching methods to student achievements has revolutionized educational practices globally.

The development of OBE theory has evolved from its initial proposal to widespread recognition. In its early stages, OBE was primarily introduced as a concept for educational reform, aiming to address issues in traditional education, such as outdated teaching methods and inadequate evaluation systems. As educational practices deepened, OBE theory gradually matured and found wide application in various educational fields, including higher education and vocational education (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Its principles have been instrumental in driving innovation and improvement in educational standards worldwide.

### Core Principles of OBE Theory

OBE theory is rooted in several core principles that guide its implementation. Firstly, it emphasizes the

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importance of defining clear and measurable learning outcomes. These outcomes serve as the benchmarks for evaluating student progress and success. Secondly, OBE adopts a reverse design approach, where the desired learning outcomes drive the curriculum development and instructional strategies. This ensures that all educational activities are aligned with the ultimate goal of achieving these outcomes. Lastly, OBE promotes continuous improvement, encouraging educators to regularly assess and refine their teaching methods and evaluation systems based on student performance data (William & Black, 1998).

### **Application of OBE Theory in Language Teaching**

The application of OBE theory in language teaching has shown promising results. By defining clear language learning outcomes, educators can create targeted instructional strategies and assessment tools that align with these outcomes. This approach helps students achieve specific language skills and competencies, such as fluency, accuracy, and cultural awareness. However, there are also limitations to consider. For instance, the focus on outcomes may sometimes overshadow the importance of the learning process, leading to a potential reduction in student engagement and motivation. Additionally, defining and measuring language learning outcomes can be challenging due to the complex and multifaceted nature of language proficiency (Acheva, 2020).

### **Application of OBE Theory in Business English Teaching**

The application of OBE theory in business English teaching holds great potential. With the increasing globalization of business, there is a growing demand for skilled business English communicators. By adopting OBE principles, educators can design curricula that specifically target the language and communication skills required in business contexts. This can include skills such as negotiating, presenting, and writing business reports. Future research should focus on refining and validating OBE-based instructional strategies and assessment tools in business English teaching, as well as exploring the impact of OBE on student learning outcomes and career success (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

### **Analysis of the Current Situation of Business English Reading Courses**

#### **Objectives and Content of Business English Reading Courses**

The core objective of business English reading courses is to cultivate students' reading comprehension skills in business English, enabling them to quickly and accurately extract key information from various business texts and make effective business decisions based on this information. This ability not only involves language skills but also higher-order skills such as cross-cultural communication and information analysis, adapting to the increasingly complex business environment in the globalized workplace. The course content is designed to be comprehensive, ranging from basic business letters and contracts to advanced market analysis reports and corporate annual reports, aiming to build a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge system of business English. At the same time, the course also incorporates soft skills such as business etiquette and communication strategies to enhance students' workplace competitiveness.

However, there are still some issues in the objective setting and content arrangement of current business English reading courses. Some course objectives are too broad and lack detailed planning for specific industries or professional backgrounds, resulting in a gap between the teaching content and actual workplace needs. Additionally, due to the longer update cycle of textbooks, some courses fail to reflect the latest business practices and language trends, such as digital business communication and emerging business models, affecting students' professional preparedness.

#### **Teaching Methods of Business English Reading Courses**

The teaching methods of business English reading courses are diverse, aiming to stimulate students' interest and participation through different teaching approaches. The lecture method, as a traditional teaching method, can systematically impart business English knowledge but lacks sufficient interactivity, potentially leading to passive knowledge acquisition by students. Group discussions and case studies can stimulate students' active

thinking and enhance their practical application abilities, but the implementation effect largely depends on students' preparation level and teachers' guiding skills.

To improve teaching effectiveness, teachers should actively explore and innovate teaching methods. For example, introducing online learning platforms to provide students with more diverse learning materials using digital resources; employing virtual simulation technology to simulate real business scenarios and enhance students' practical experience; implementing project-based learning to allow students to improve their business English application abilities while solving practical problems.

### **Assessment System of Business English Reading Courses**

The current assessment system for Business English Reading courses primarily evaluates language form, such as vocabulary and grammar, while overlooking practical application and problem-solving in real business contexts. Moreover, assessment methods are limited and often fail to account for individual student differences, resulting in potential biases.

To improve the assessment system, diversified assessment methods can be introduced. For example, through tasks such as simulated business negotiations and writing business reports, students' business English application abilities can be examined; establishing self-assessment and peer-assessment mechanisms to encourage students to actively participate in the assessment process, improving the accuracy and effectiveness of the assessment; utilizing big data and artificial intelligence technologies to conduct in-depth analysis of students' learning data to more comprehensively understand their learning situations and progress.

### **Application Design of Obe Theory in Business English Reading Courses**

Under the guidance of the OBE theory, the framework for Business English Reading courses includes targeted implementation measures designed to achieve teaching objectives and improve teaching quality.

### **Clarification and Achievement Strategies of Teaching Objectives**

In Business English Reading courses, the setting of teaching objectives should closely align with the characteristics of the Business English major and market demands. These objectives should be clear, specific, and measurable, covering systematic learning of Business English knowledge, cultivation of practical abilities, and stimulation of innovative capabilities across multiple dimensions. Additionally, the setting of teaching objectives should fully respect individual differences among students, ensuring they are highly compatible with students' learning needs and career development paths.

To achieve these objectives, we adopt a strategy of reverse designing teaching content. That is, starting from the expected learning outcomes, we reversely derive teaching content and strategies, ensuring that each link is closely centered around the teaching objectives. By integrating diverse teaching resources such as textbooks, materials, images, videos, etc., we construct a rich and varied teaching resource library, providing students with personalized learning paths to meet the needs of different learning styles and ability levels.

Furthermore, we implement layered teaching, setting teaching tasks and challenges of varying difficulty based on students' foundations and ability levels, in order to stimulate their learning motivation and self-confidence, ensuring that each student can improve at their own suitable level.

### **Specific Implementation Measures**

**Establish a diversified feedback mechanism:** We utilize various channels such as online questionnaires, discussion areas in the Learning Management System (LMS), anonymous feedback boxes, etc., to encourage students to actively seek feedback. At the same time, teachers need to provide timely and accurate constructive feedback to help students adjust their learning strategies and enhance their learning effects.

**Strengthen practical teaching:** Through practical activities such as real case analysis, market research, simulated business negotiations, etc., students' practical operational abilities and problem-solving abilities are

enhanced. By collaborating with enterprises, real business projects are introduced to allow students to deepen their understanding and application of Business English reading skills in practice.

**Introduce project-based learning:** Design projects that meet market demands, guide students to solve practical problems through teamwork, and cultivate teamwork abilities and innovative thinking. Through group cooperation, students apply the knowledge they have learned to improve their overall quality.

**Utilize technological tools to assist in teaching:** Introduce AI intelligent learning platforms to provide students with personalized learning resources and paths. Use Virtual Reality (VR) technology to create virtual business environments, allowing students to enhance their Business English reading abilities in immersive experiences. At the same time, utilize online collaboration tools such as Google Docs, Trello, etc., to promote team collaboration and project management among students.

**Cultivate autonomous learning abilities:** Establish an autonomous learning resource library, including e-books, online courses, industry reports, etc., for students to access and learn at any time. Encourage students to formulate personal learning plans and cultivate autonomous learning abilities and time management skills.

**Provide career planning guidance:** Offer career planning guidance services to help students understand industry dynamics and career development paths, and formulate personal career development plans. Invite industry experts or enterprise mentors to conduct lectures or workshops to provide students with suggestions and guidance for career development.

### **Assessment and Feedback Mechanism**

To ensure the achievement of teaching objectives and the improvement of teaching quality, we have established a scientific assessment system. This system includes both process-based and result-based assessments, using various methods such as exams, practical reports, project presentations, etc., to comprehensively understand students' learning situations and ability levels. At the same time, we fully utilize the assessment results to promptly identify students' deficiencies and weaknesses, guiding them to improve their learning methods and strategies. Through reflection and summarization of teaching effects, we continuously optimize teaching content and methods to continuously improve teaching quality.

### **Challenges Faced**

When delving into the challenges faced by the application of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) theory in business English reading courses, we must recognize their multidimensional and complex nature. Insufficient teacher training is the primary and core issue. Although many business English reading teachers have heard of OBE theory, they struggle to convert it into practical teaching strategies. This primarily stems from the lack of targeted training opportunities and resources, limiting teachers' understanding and application of OBE concepts. Furthermore, constraints on teacher training in terms of time and funding further exacerbate the issue of insufficient training, reducing the quality and coverage of training.

The scarcity and mismatch of teaching resources also pose a significant challenge. High-quality business English reading materials are essential for implementing OBE theory, yet many schools or institutions face a shortage of materials that align with OBE principles. Meanwhile, although modern teaching aids such as online learning platforms and virtual laboratories can greatly enrich teaching methods, not all schools have the conditions to introduce these tools. This scarcity and mismatch of teaching resources limit the effective implementation of OBE theory in business English reading courses.

### **Countermeasures and Suggestions**

In response to the above challenges, this paper proposes a series of specific and targeted countermeasures and suggestions. In terms of strengthening teacher training, schools or institutions should regularly organize OBE theory training seminars, inviting experts in related fields to lecture, to enhance teachers' understanding and application of OBE concepts. At the same time, encourage teacher-to-teacher communication and cooperation, establish a teacher exchange platform, share successful cases and experiences, and create a positive learning



atmosphere.

In terms of optimizing teaching resources, schools or institutions should actively develop or introduce more business English reading materials that align with OBE principles, ensuring their practicality and relevance. Additionally, make full use of modern information technology tools, such as online learning platforms and virtual laboratories, to provide students with more diversified learning methods and resources. These measures not only help improve teaching effectiveness but also stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, thereby facilitating the effective implementation of OBE theory in business English reading courses.

### **Future Research Directions**

When exploring future research directions for the application of OBE theory in business English reading courses, this paper identifies several issues worthy of further investigation. Firstly, how to better integrate OBE concepts with the specific content of business English reading courses to enhance students' reading and practical application abilities. This requires researchers to deeply explore the specific application strategies and methods of OBE concepts in business English reading courses and validate their effectiveness through empirical research.

Secondly, how to assess the implementation effect of OBE theory in business English reading courses and make continuous improvements accordingly. This involves selecting assessment indicators, determining assessment methods, and interpreting assessment results. Researchers need to establish a scientific and reasonable assessment system to comprehensively and objectively evaluate the implementation effect of OBE theory in business English reading courses and propose targeted improvement suggestions based on the assessment results, to promote the continuous improvement and optimization of OBE theory.

Thirdly, strengthen communication and feedback between teachers and students. A good teacher-student relationship and an effective communication mechanism are essential safeguards for implementing Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) theory. Teachers need to closely monitor students' learning progress and difficulties, provide timely feedback, and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Here are some practical steps to enhance communication and feedback, fostering a more engaging and effective educational environment:

**Regular Check-ins:** Establishing a routine for regular check-ins can be a powerful tool for maintaining open lines of communication. These meetings can be brief and focused, giving students the opportunity to voice any concerns or celebrate successes without feeling overwhelmed. Teachers can use these check-ins to provide constructive feedback on assignments, assess understanding, and offer additional resources or support as needed.

**Open-Door Policy:** An open-door policy signifies a commitment to accessibility and responsiveness. It tells students that their voices are valued and that they can seek help whenever they need it. Teachers should make themselves available during office hours and be prepared to discuss academic issues, personal struggles, or any other concerns that may be impacting a student's learning.

**Use of Technology:** Leveraging technology can break down barriers and make communication more convenient for both teachers and students. Learning management systems (LMS) like Canvas or Blackboard can be used to distribute assignments, collect feedback, and facilitate online discussions. Additionally, communication tools such as email, instant messaging, and video conferencing can enable more flexible and personal interactions.

**Feedback Forms:** Implementing structured feedback forms can provide a systematic way for students to give their input on various aspects of the course. These forms can be designed to gather quantitative data (e.g., ratings on a scale) and qualitative data (e.g., open-ended comments). By analyzing this feedback, teachers can identify patterns, address common concerns, and make informed decisions about course improvements.

**Peer Feedback:** Incorporating peer feedback sessions into the curriculum can promote a sense of community and collaboration among students. When students evaluate each other's work, they learn to recognize strengths and weaknesses in their own and others' writing, presentations, or projects. This process also helps develop

critical thinking and communication skills.

**Clear Expectations:** Setting clear expectations for communication and feedback is crucial for maintaining a productive learning environment. Teachers should outline when and how students can expect to receive feedback, as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work. Similarly, students should be guided on how to provide constructive feedback to their peers and teachers, ensuring that all interactions are respectful and purposeful.

**Active Listening:** Active listening is a critical communication skill that teachers must practice when receiving feedback from students. This involves fully engaging with what the student is saying, acknowledging their concerns, and providing thoughtful, actionable responses. By demonstrating empathy and understanding, teachers can create a safe space where students feel encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences.

**Reflective Practice:** Encouraging reflective practice among both teachers and students can lead to continuous improvement and deeper understanding of the learning process. Teachers can use reflection to assess their own teaching strategies, identify areas for growth, and adapt their approaches based on student feedback. Students, too, can benefit from reflecting on their learning experiences, identifying what worked well and what didn't, and setting goals for future improvement.

By implementing these strategies, educators can strengthen communication and feedback between teachers and students, creating a more dynamic and responsive learning environment that aligns with the principles of OBE. This, in turn, leads to improved student outcomes, a deeper understanding of the learning process, and a more engaging and fulfilling educational experience for all involved.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examines the application of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in Business English Reading instruction, emphasizing a student-centered approach and outcome-driven teaching. The course aims to foster students' ability to effectively comprehend business texts, covering a range of materials from business letters to market reports. To apply OBE theory, it is necessary to set specific teaching objectives, reverse design course content, adopt diversified teaching methods, and establish a scientific evaluation system. This application helps enhance students' Business English reading skills and promotes continuous improvement in teaching.

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