

Research on Teaching Reform of Cross-Curricular Integrated Design for English Majors Guided by OBE Philosophy: Focusing on Strengthening Basic Language Skills

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Abstract: This study explores the design and implementation of a cross-curricular integrated teaching model for English majors under the guidance of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) philosophy, with a core objective of strengthening students' basic language skills. By integrating language skill training across multiple courses (e.g., Comprehensive English, Listening and Speaking, Literature, and Translation), the reform emphasizes the alignment of curriculum objectives, teaching activities, and assessment methods with predefined learning outcomes. Through a mixed-method approach—including quantitative analysis of standardized test scores, qualitative interviews with students and faculty, and classroom observations—this research evaluates the effectiveness of the model in enhancing students' language proficiency, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary competence. Results indicate significant improvements in students' performance on standardized exams (e.g., TEM-4 pass rate increased by 15%), heightened engagement in collaborative tasks, and strengthened cross-cultural communication skills. Challenges such as resource allocation and faculty workload are also discussed, with recommendations for optimizing curriculum design and leveraging technology. This study provides actionable insights for institutions aiming to align English language education with global competency standards.

Keywords: Outcome-Based Education (OBE); Language Skills; Cross-Curricular Integration; English Teaching Reform; Competency-Based Assessment

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

In the context of globalization, English majors are expected to possess not only advanced language proficiency but also interdisciplinary competencies to thrive in diverse professional settings. However, traditional English teaching models often suffer from fragmented curricula, where isolated courses (e.g., grammar, literature, translation) fail to synergize in cultivating holistic language skills. This disconnect leads to a mismatch between classroom instruction and real-world language demands, resulting in graduates with “high scores but low practical abilities.”

The Outcome-Based Education (OBE) philosophy, which prioritizes clearly defined learning outcomes and student-centered pedagogy, offers a promising framework to address these challenges. By reorienting curriculum design around measurable competencies—such as critical analysis, cross-cultural communication, and creative expression—OBE aligns teaching practices with the evolving needs of learners and society.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to design a cross-curricular integrated teaching model for English majors under OBE principles, focusing on strengthening basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation). Besides, it evaluates the model's impact on students' language proficiency, interdisciplinary competence, and motivation. Finally, it identifies challenges in implementation and propose optimization strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in Language Teaching

OBE, rooted in the work of Spady (1994),

emphasizes backward design, where curricula are built by first defining desired outcomes and then aligning instructional activities and assessments to achieve them. In language education, OBE shifts focus from content coverage to skill mastery, fostering learner autonomy and adaptability (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Studies by Richards (2013) demonstrate that OBE-driven curricula enhance students' ability to apply language skills in authentic contexts, such as debates, presentations, and collaborative projects.

2.2 Cross-Curricular Integration in English Programs

Cross-curricular integration breaks down disciplinary silos by connecting content and skills across courses. For instance, integrating literature analysis with writing courses enables students to critique texts while practicing academic writing (Cummins, 2008). Such approaches not only reinforce language fundamentals but also cultivate higher-order thinking skills like synthesis and evaluation.

2.3 Challenges in Implementing OBE

Key challenges in implementing OBE include faculty resistance, resource constraints and assessment complexity. Faculty resistance: teachers accustomed to lecture-based methods may struggle with outcome-focused pedagogy. Resource constraints: designing integrated tasks requires time, collaboration, and technological support. Assessment complexity: measuring competencies like "critical thinking" demands innovative tools beyond traditional exams.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining Quantitative Data and Qualitative Data. Quantitative Data: TEM-4 scores, vocabulary tests, and course grades of 200 English majors (pre- and post-reform). Qualitative Data: Semi-structured interviews with 30 students and 10 faculty members, classroom observations, and analysis of student portfolios.

3.2 The OBE-Driven Cross-Curricular Model

The model comprises three core components:

Outcome Mapping, Integrated Task Design and Competency-Based Assessment. Outcome Mapping: Define competencies (e.g., "Deliver a persuasive speech using rhetorical devices"). Align outcomes with courses (e.g., linking speech delivery to Public Speaking and Rhetoric classes). Integrated Task Design: Example Task: "Global Issues Symposium". Listening/Speaking: Research and present on climate change. Writing: Draft policy proposals. Translation: Translate proposals into Chinese for stakeholder review. Competency-Based Assessment: Rubrics evaluating language accuracy, critical analysis, and teamwork. Peer reviews and self-assessment journals.

3.3 Implementation Process

Phase 1 (Pilot): Redesign syllabi for Comprehensive English and Advanced Writing to include collaborative projects. Phase 2 (Full Implementation): Expand integration to literature and translation courses, supported by faculty workshops. Phase 3 (Evaluation): Collect data over two academic years.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Findings

TEM-4 Rate: Increased from 65% (pre-reform) to 80% (post-reform). Vocabulary Acquisition: Average vocabulary size rose by 28% (from 5,200 to 6,650 words). Course Performance: Students in integrated courses scored 12% higher in writing and speaking tasks.

4.2 Qualitative Insights

Student Feedback: "The symposium project helped me connect textbook knowledge to real-world issues." (Participant 7). "Peer reviews made me more aware of my grammar mistakes." (Participant 15). Faculty Observations: "Collaborative tasks reduced passive learning; students now actively seek feedback." (Instructor A)

4.3 Challenges Identified

Key challenges include Workload Imbalance and Assessment Subjectivity. Workload Imbalance: 70% of faculty reported increased preparation time. Technology Gaps: Limited access to AI tools for personalized feedback. Assessment Subjectivity: Rubrics required multiple revisions to ensure fairness.

5. Optimization Strategies

Faculty Development: Provide OBE training workshops and reduce administrative burdens.

Technology Integration: Adopt AI platforms (e.g., Grammarly, iFLYTEK) for automated writing and speaking assessments.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that an OBE-guided cross-curricular model effectively strengthens English majors' language fundamentals while fostering interdisciplinary competence. By prioritizing outcome alignment, integrated tasks, and dynamic assessment, institutions can bridge the gap between academic training and societal demands. Future research should explore AI-enhanced personalization and global partnership models to further advance language education.

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