Research on teaching mode of Business English reading based on BOPPPS model and blended teaching--taking the lesson of *Creative Strategies Prompt Consumers to Buy, Buy, Buy* as an example

Ying YIN, Huan YUAN, Xinjin SONG

Hubei Business College, Wuhan 430079, China

Abstract: Business English reading place a higher demand on students' business knowledge and English proficiency. For independent college students who have weak foundations and lack initiative in learning, the traditional spoon-feeding teaching approach needs to be improved. With the wide use of online teaching platforms, such as Chaoxing, Rain Classroom and Teachermate, blended teaching has become popular among many teachers and students. Many educators are trying to integrate different teaching models into blended classrooms to improve the quality of Business English teaching. Among them, BOPPPS teaching model, which stresses participatory learning as well as students' feedback [1], is gaining wide recognition. This paper, utilizing the online teaching platform Teachermate, took the business reading text *Creative Strategies Prompt Consumers to Buy, Buy, Buy* as an example to design a Business English classroom based on BOPPPS teaching model. The research tries to provide an applicable model with feasible methods through the teaching practice, thus improving teaching effectiveness in Business English reading classrooms.

Key words: BOPPPS teaching model; Business English Reading; blended teaching; teaching effectiveness

1 Introduction

Optimizing blended teaching in English classes requires selecting a suitable teaching model. Represented by six abbreviations of bridge-in, objective, pre-assessment, participatory learning, post-assessment, and summary, the BOPPPS teaching model divides the teaching process into six phases and helps facilitate interactions between students and teachers and thus organizes an active classroom. However, most of the applications of the BOPPPS teaching model are conducted offline in general English courses rather than in those designed for a specific purpose. Therefore, implementing a blended teaching mode that incorporates online and offline teaching into the BOPPPS model in English for specific purpose classrooms should be considered to optimize each phase and teaching effectiveness in the end. This research aims to establish an effective teaching mode by constructing a blended teaching classroom within the framework of BOPPPS tailored for Business English reading class.

2 BOPPPS teaching model

The BOPPPS teaching model is a curriculum design model initially developed by the Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) in Canada [2]. It is a student-centered teaching model that emphasizes participatory learning. With specific aims for each stage, BOPPPS model divides the whole teaching process into six phases, namely bridge-in, objective, pre-assessment, participatory learning, post-assessment and summary.

3 Teaching practice based on BOPPPS model

The text for this practice, *Creative Strategies Prompt Consumers to Buy, Buy, Buy*, is from Business English reading textbook used by second year students at Hubei Business College. Based on the BOPPPS model, the teaching process is divided into three stages: before, during, and after class [3]. This teaching practice, which incorporated online and offline teaching, was also divided into three stages: before lecture (including bridge-in, objectives, pre-assessment), in lecture (including participatory learning, post assessment) and after lecture (including summary).

3.1 Before lecture

The first three phases of BOPPPS model, namely, bridge-in, objectives, and pre-assessment, were carried out online before the lecture based on the teaching design. A good bridge-in is a powerful hook that grabs learners' attention and generates their learning motivation, and clear objectives act as a lighthouse for the students to sail safely on the ocean of learning. Meanwhile, pre-assessment is the test that helps both teachers and students realize what learners have grasped and what areas require further improvement.

The teacher designed a survey entitled *Who Took My Money* based on the content of the teaching text and posted it on Teachermate two days before the scheduled class. For the second five questions, three options were available, in contrast to the two options provided for the first five questions. The first five questions were like: Which cup of popcorn would you like, a small one or a medium one? And the latter is like: Which cup of popcorn would you like, a small one, a medium one, or a large one? Clear images and eye-catching titles made the survey more appealing, and students picked their answers intuitively and quickly. Since these questions were closely related to students' daily lives, they helped grab their attention and introduce new learning content well.

After completing the bridge-in phase, students could access a slide on Teachermate that outlined the learning objectives, expected outcomes, key points, and difficult points. Clear and explicit objectives are the foundation and basis for teaching and learning. Therefore, the teacher needs to ensure that those objectives are straightforward and understandable to students. Additionally, objectives should be specific and measurable, allowing students to assess their learning outcomes after the lecture. More specifically, the knowledge objectives are to summarize the main idea of the text, to master the key terms, and to use new words and expressions correctly. The ability objective aims to cultivate critical thinking ability and research ability. The value objective is to encourage students to contemplate how to use money wisely and develop a habit of rational consumption.

In addition, a short video about factors influencing customers' decisions was also played on Teachermate. Related questions such as "how many factors are mentioned in this video; what are they" were used as the pre-assessment, which is a bridge to understand students' current mastery of the knowledge and adjust subsequent teaching accordingly. On the one hand, these questions guide students to know some terms concerning pricing strategies, as they have to figure out the meanings of those terms by themselves, which makes subsequent learning easier. On the other hand, the statistical results calculated automatically by Teachermate enable the teacher to get a direct reference on students' current understanding of the knowledge and identify their potential issues they may encounter with the content. As a result, possible adjustments to the teaching focus and activities were made to lay a foundation for students' further learning.

The three phases conducted online prior to lecture teaching efficiently assisted the teacher in introducing the teaching contents and assessing students' learning progress, thereby saving time for in-class activities and ultimately enhancing the overall teaching effectiveness.

3.2 In lecture

The in-lecture stage consists of participatory learning and post-assessment, which combines online and offline activities.

Among the six phases of BOPPPS teaching, participatory learning, which highlights students' dominant role and their interaction and collaboration, is the main part of the whole teaching and learning process [4]. At this stage, the teacher is an organizer and facilitator, whose chief responsibility is to organize situations in which students can learn actively. Various forms of learning tasks, such as pair/group discussion, debate, role play, and interview, would engage more students in class activities once cleverly designed, whether online or offline. Considering the weak foundation of the students, the teacher designed the following in-class activities based on the content of the given reading text and students' performance in the pre-assessment.

In the first activity, students were prompted to engage in a pair discussion concerning the factors that exert influence on buyers' decisions. This collaborative exchange of information facilitated the recollection of topic-related terminologies and phrases learned from the video. Then, via the online random picker tool implemented by Teachermate, selected students were called upon to present their opinions. This discussion served to enhance students' comprehension of their prior knowledge and kindled their attention on the related content.

The second task was a self-teaching of vocabulary. Specifically, the teacher posted a list of challenging words on Teachermate and asked students to find out the meaning of each word through collaborative discussions with their peers or consultation with their e-dictionary. Subsequently, the students were required to complete the online blank-filling exercise to check their mastery of the acquired knowledge. Notably, the primary objective of this exercise was to pave the way for the upcoming reading task.

Jigsaw reading, an information gap-filling activity, came next. The teacher divided the whole class into four expert groups. The first and second expert groups were required to read the first and second parts of the text respectively and find out the main idea of each part. The third and fourth expert groups tried to understand the meaning of pricing decoy and reference price individually. After completing their tasks, four members from four different groups regrouped and exchanged the information they had gained with each other. The teacher provided guidance and timely support during the whole process. Then one expert student was selected from each group to recount the information they had collected. Differences occurred among the four versions, so students returned to the original text, confirming the accuracy of the shared information and checking the missed information. Through the activity, students, as the subject of learning, gained a deep understanding of the text and honed their communication and collaboration skills.

After the three tasks, students understood the main idea of the text as well as the definitions of some terms. Consequently, the lesson focus shifted to sentence analysis and text appreciation. First, the teacher listed some complex sentences on the slide and guided students to identify the main sentence structure by locating the subject, the predicate, the object. Second, students discussed and translated these sentences. The teacher clarified the sentences when the sentences were beyond students' understanding. Subsequently, the teacher introduced rhetorical devices with examples and asked students to identify these sentences in the text and explain the usage of the devices in the context. Additional example sentences were provided to ensure students' comprehension. By the end of this part, students understood how to analyze complex sentences and appreciate different rhetorical devices.

A post-assessment was conducted to evaluate students' mastery of the contents after the lecture. The teacher sent out several multiple-choice questions on Teachermate ten minutes before the end of the class. Students were required to select the correct word and definition and match the appropriate rhetorical device. The post-assessment helped the teacher assess students' achievement of the learning outcomes and also allowed her/him to clarify any misunderstandings of the contents.

3.3 After lecture

The last phase of the BOPPPS teaching model comprises a summary, which is beneficial for both students and teachers as it prompts reflection on learning outcomes and identifies areas for improvement. For instance, the teacher uploaded a topic-related reading excerpt from *The Economist* on Teachermate and encouraged students to draw a mind map of the main contents. The students were asked to watch the documentary *My Money and Me* and post their reflections on it, which intended to remind them of the importance of rational consumption. Also, students were encouraged to ask questions through the online platform if they encountered any problems after class.

4 Limitations and suggestions

With the framework of the BOPPPS model, this hybrid teaching mode displayed its merits in facilitating learning initiatives and improving teaching efficiency; however, it also revealed some limitations.

Firstly, it increases the learning burden on some students. Due to the specialization in Business English, many students were used to spoon-feeding. However, this mode emphasizes students' self-learning, which means that students need to spend more time searching for information and organizing ideas even if what they had done was futile. As a result, not all students showed their interest in this mode.

Another aspect worth considering is the teaching pace in independent colleges, which may be overly fast for some weak students. Problems arise when teachers erroneously assume that all students have completed their tasks diligently, leading to a tightly packed lecture content that may not cater to all learning speeds. However, for those students who have not completed their tasks with due diligence or have difficulty grasping the material, the in-lecture activities prove hard to follow.

Furthermore, the lack of timely guidance and insufficient supervision regarding pre-lectures and post-lecture online assessments have left students with limited choices but to review their accuracy rates after completing the tasks, which has resulted in a poor comprehension of the underlying meanings and a failure to identify the learning points that require improvement, ultimately hindering their academic progress.

Effective teaching requires a thorough understanding of students' learning levels and the teaching contents. More specifically, the learning level of the students and the teaching materials determine the teaching focus and the types of activities. Therefore, when assigning tasks and activities, teachers should always take into account students' learning levels to ensure that they are engaging and challenging but not too overwhelming for students while achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Besides, teachers should provide guidance in arranging online tasks. That is to say, for online assignments such as multiple-choice, teachers should better provide explanations alongside the correct answers to guide students in their learning. For after-lecture homework, especially those subjective questions, the answer keys, and the underlying thinking process should be presented rather than giving simple evaluations such as "well done" or "try hard". By providing comprehensive feedback on online tasks, teachers can carefully guide students in promoting their engagement and achievement in online learning.

5 Conclusion

The BOPPPS-based blended teaching mode prioritizes students' active engagement in learning and encourages the use

of online learning methods. By refining the traditional three-step teaching process and creating a mutually beneficial teaching and learning experience, this mode offers a bi-directional interaction between teachers and students, enhances students' learning initiative, and improves teaching effectiveness. Moreover, the online teaching platform diversifies class activities, attracts students' interest in Business English reading, and breaks the limits of time and space in teaching and learning. It also updates students' learning progress for teachers. However, both online pre-assessment and offline participatory learning should cater to students' learning levels and the reading materials. Therefore, further research and practices are necessary to deepen the reform and innovation of the Business English reading teaching mode.

Conflicts of interest

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

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