

A Study on Multi-modal Classroom Teaching of Business English from the Perspective of Output-Driven Hypothesis

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Abstract: Under the guidance of The National Criteria of Teaching Quality for Undergraduate Business English Majors, this paper focuses on the deficiencies of traditional classroom teaching in training applied business English talents and explores building of a multi-modal classroom teaching system of business English from three aspects: multi-modal input, multi-modal output and multi-modal evaluation based on output-driven hypothesis theory and multi-modal teaching theory. Taking Business English Correspondence as an example, this paper introduces the multi-modal classroom teaching practice of business English with the help of modern educational technology, so as to optimize the efficiency of language input and improve the quality of business English talents cultivation.

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, business English has become increasingly prominent in global trade, and plays an increasingly important role in promoting China's foreign relationships, economic prosperity, scientific and technological progress and social development. In order to improve the quality of business English talents cultivation, The National Criteria of Teaching Quality for Undergraduate Business English Majors puts forward that teachers should bear student-centered and ability-oriented concept in mind to promote whole-person development and personality development. And they should also constantly improve teaching methods and means, make rational use of modern educational technology, pay attention to teaching effect and continuously improve teaching quality. It also advocates that teachers should choose scientific evaluation methods with reasonable contents and standards in combination with formative and summative assessment.

However, in the traditional foreign language classroom, many disadvantages affect the quality of applied business English talents cultivation such as poor language input, deaf-mute English resulting from imbalance between input and output, high marks and low ability, time-consuming and inefficiency, and theory divorced from practice. Swain (1985) put forward the comprehensible output hypothesis from the cognitive perspective and Professor Wen Qiufang put forward the output-driven hypothesis based on input and driven by output. In addition, with the rapid development of information and network technology, Gu Yueguo (2007) proposed that multi-modal learning mode with screen and image, animation, audio and video as the major media is conducive to students' learning. From the perspective of output-driven hypothesis, this paper explores how to construct multi-modal classroom teaching of business English with the help of information and modern educational technology, focusing on students' speaking, writing and translation, so as to optimize the efficiency of language input and improve the quality of business English talents cultivation.

2. Output Hypothesis Theory, Output-Driven Hypothesis Theory, and Multi-modality Theory

2.1. Output Hypothesis Theory in Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) theory is the foundation of foreign language teaching, and input and output theory is the core of SLA. Based on Stephen D. Krashen's input hypothesis, Merrill Swain (1985), a Canadian linguist, put forward comprehensible output hypothesis from a cognitive perspective, assuming that "in addition to the necessary comprehensible input, learners must have the opportunity to use the language learned to be fluent and more like native speakers (Johnson,2000:84). All successful SLA requires not only a large number of comprehensible inputs, but also a certain amount of comprehensible outputs. Therefore, input and output are inseparable. In the process of SLA, input is prior to output. Without sufficient language input, learners will not be able to acquire the necessary knowledge. Input is the key and prerequisite of output, but input cannot be transformed into output spontaneously. Only when learners understand, absorb, practice and output it, can input be internalized and mastered, and the comprehensible input can be enhanced. Therefore, in order to be a successful second language learner, we must go through three steps: a large number of comprehensible input→processing, storing and internalizing the linguistic knowledge system → a certain amount of language output. Dealing with the relative balance of input and output in SLA teaching and improving the quality of input and output are of vital importance to the success of teaching.

2.2. Output-driven Hypothesis proposed by Wen Qiufang

Professor Wen Qiufang (2008) put forward the output-driven hypothesis for the first time in "Output-driven

Hypothesis and English Professional Skills Curriculum Reform”. This hypothesis includes three sub-hypotheses: first, output is more powerful than input in promoting foreign language ability; second, cultivating students' expressive skills, such as speaking, writing and translation, especially oral interpretation and written translation, is more social than that of receptive skills such as listening and reading; third, the output-oriented comprehensive teaching is more effective than the single skill training, and more in line with the future employment requirements. The output-driven hypothesis and Swain's output hypothesis have both similarities and differences. Both assume that output can promote the second language acquisition ability. Output is the direct manifestation of language, both a goal and a means. It is a means to promote input absorption. Output-driven can improve not only output capability, but also the efficiency of input absorption. College business English students already have a certain English input, and are able to achieve the creative output. Therefore, they can easily recognize problems and shortcomings in the output. In order to complete the task, they will refer to the right language paradigm. And in this process, they can further promote their listening and reading, and combine learning with application, which is conducive to improving the comprehensive language ability. What's more, input serves output instead of being passive. Therefore, it is feasible to apply the output-driven hypothesis to college business English teaching.

2.3. Multi-modality Theory and Multi-modal Teaching

Multi-modality refers to the interaction of three or more senses. Professor Gu Yueguo (2007:6) calls the learning behavior accompanied by modal changes between input and output a “modal transformation learning”. For example, students repeat what they have read, which is a modal transformation learning while students only understand what they have read, which is not. Appropriate modal transformation can enhance learners' internalization of learning and improve the durability of memory. In today's teaching, multi-modal teaching can almost spontaneously trigger multi-modal learning by effectively collecting, processing, integrating, storing, transmitting and applying a large number of audio and video resources in a digital environment based on multimedia, computer and network technology. Research shows that the more modes, the more information and experience human beings acquire. The richer the experience and the modal transformation, the more beneficial to the students.

3. Construction of Multi-modal Classroom Teaching of Business English based on Output-driven Hypothesis

The multi-modal classroom teaching can be built through network technology, virtual reality, big data, cloud

computing, mobile internet, etc. And the modern educational technology provides point-to-point, end-to-end channel transmission and one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many interactive ways to construct multi-modal teaching content. Based on the output-driven hypothesis, teachers can construct a multi-modal classroom teaching system, carry out multi-modal teaching interaction, and implement multi-modal teaching evaluation, so as to realize the goal of internalizing knowledge through modal transformation. Guided by Wen Qiufang's output-driven hypothesis theory, this paper shows how to construct a multi-modal classroom teaching system of business English from three aspects: multi-modal input, multi-modal output and multi-modal evaluation (see Figure 1), so as to realize the complementarity of input and output.

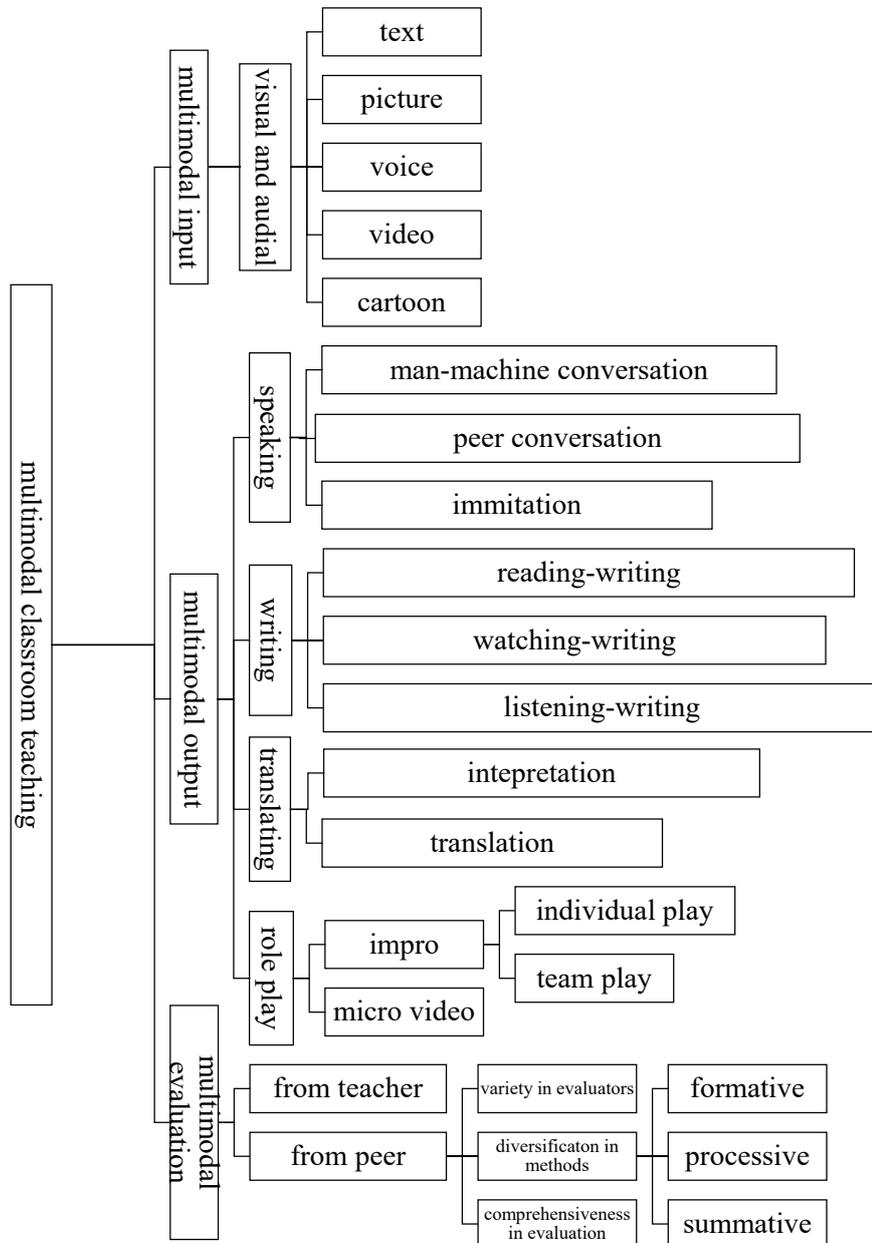


Figure 1 Multi-modal Classroom Teaching System of Business English

3.1. Multi-modal Input in Business English Classroom Teaching

Language input is the premise and foundation of language acquisition. Without input, there will be no output. Multi-modal classroom teaching requires the multi-modal input. Multi-modal Pan-PPT is one of the important manifestations and technical means of multi-modal teaching content. Multi-modal Pan-PPT assists classroom teaching, offers life-like teaching and convenience as far as possible, and provides multi-channel expression of discourse meaning for spreading knowledge and information, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning, and further consolidate knowledge. Multi-modal Pan-PPT refers not only to the traditional PowerPoint, but also the interactive multimedia courseware based on page display by means of two or more symbolic systems representing teaching content, objectives and requirements in teaching design. Multi-modal input in classroom teaching is realized mainly through auditory, visual and tactile senses. Integrating visual elements such as text, image, sound, video and animation, helps students understand non-linguistic factors in audio-visual materials and improves the input.

3.2. Multi-modal Output in Business English Classroom Teaching

Listening, reading and watching are input skills in SLA, while speaking, writing and translating are output skills. Under the premise of effectively guaranteeing the multi-modal input in business English classroom teaching, the linear process of input-absorption-integration-output is realized through the teaching links such as speaking, writing, translating and role playing. Based on multi-modal output, students are encouraged to acquire active and useful language input through listening, reading and watching. In addition, multi-modal output can promote the cyclic multi-modal transformation between input and output, improve the efficiency of students' input absorption, optimize the teaching effect and improve the teaching quality.

3.2.1. Multi-modal Output in Oral Business English

Business English belongs to applied linguistics. Practical oral English for business plays an important role in business communication. Influenced by the traditional teaching mode, most college students do not have a strong sense of active participation. As the saying goes, "interest is the best teacher." Multi-modal teaching by means of human-computer conversation, peer conversation and sound imitation is conducive to improving students' interest. The author takes "Watching videos to learn oral business English" as an example to show the teaching procedures. Teachers post videos on the online platform of business English, which covers 18 scenarios such as inquiry, discussion, debate, introduction, inform, advice, entrustment, threat, greeting, thanks, speech, praise, expression, request, apology, invitation, statement and encouragement. After watching videos online,

students imitate the conversations in various business situations through mobile phones or microphones, record and upload them to the platform, and carry out man-machine conversation. Hence, teacher-machine interaction and student-machine interaction can be achieved. Social software (such as WeChat, QQ, and Facebook) can also be used to share and spread their videos. And students' learning enthusiasm and confidence can be stimulated through peer review, peer conversation and peer praise. In the sound imitation, the teachers summarize the core vocabulary, typical sentences and outstanding sentence patterns by playing the multi-modal pan-PPT to demonstrate conversation. And the students will do some multi-modal sound imitation such as imitating the pronunciation, intonation, action and expression to strengthen their participation consciousness and enthusiasm.

3.2.2. Multi-modal Output in Business English Writing

English writing is not simply isolated recording thoughts, nor an affiliated act subordinate to spoken language, but a complex knowledge construction in reality. Both learners and teachers should realize that English writing is not only a language training, but also a thinking training. Only through practice can writing skills be continuously improved. Under the guidance of the output-driven hypothesis, the multi-modal output in business English writing is based on the practice of business English in the workplace. In addition to the traditional language symbols, it also contains sound, action, color, image, technology and other system symbols. The multi-modal teaching in business English writing includes three models, that is, reading-writing, watching-writing and listening-writing. In the "reading-writing" model, teachers create inquiries by means of MSN, BBS, and QQ. When students need to complete transactions through business letters, they firstly need to grasp the basic format of letters. Secondly, they should use professional vocabulary and terminology to make an offer and a counter offer, place orders, negotiate payment, charter ships, verify packaging methods and sign the contract. Finally, they will deliver goods and receive the payment. In the "watching-writing" model, abundant multi-modal information symbols are provided through radio, video, WeChat, Internet and other media to display fixed topics in the business workplaces, such as internal mail, memorandum, minutes, etc. Students are required to interpret the language diversely and analyze the meaning and information in multi-modal discourse. And they are encouraged to use multi-modality to construct meanings independently, so to broaden their horizons and strengthen their thinking. Listening-writing model is more difficult. Firstly, teachers provide corpus such as interesting topics or hot issues. Secondly, students get information and gist by listening, and write a short essay after internalizing what they have listened. This model aims to train students' listening and thinking abilities. In addition, in the multi-modal writing teaching, business English network teaching platform, mobile phone,

WeChat and other media can be used to carry out time-limited writing and free writing, as well as publish and share their articles.

3.2.3. Multi-modal Output in Business English Translation

In business English, translation includes translation (reading and writing) and interpretation (listening and speaking). As for the interpretation, the two parties are on the spot, so the success of interpretation often depends on people's ability to mobilize other senses in communication by various means, especially the construction of non-verbal communication symbols such as images, gestures, postures, eyes, nods and facial expressions through vision. Therefore, the multi-modal output of business English interpretation based on the output-driven hypothesis should combine network and multimedia technology to construct personas or simulate translation scenarios (see figure 2), so as to create a multi-modal interpretation training environment. And the input of multi-modal information symbols can fully mobilize students' cognitive ability and stimulate their interest and enthusiasm in learning. For example, in the teaching of business interpretation, virtual reality technology can be used to show the grand occasion of China-ASEAN Expo, create interpreting scenarios such as business meetings, business escorts, business ceremonies and business reception. And learners interpret on-site through human-computer interaction to achieve multi-modal output of business interpretation.

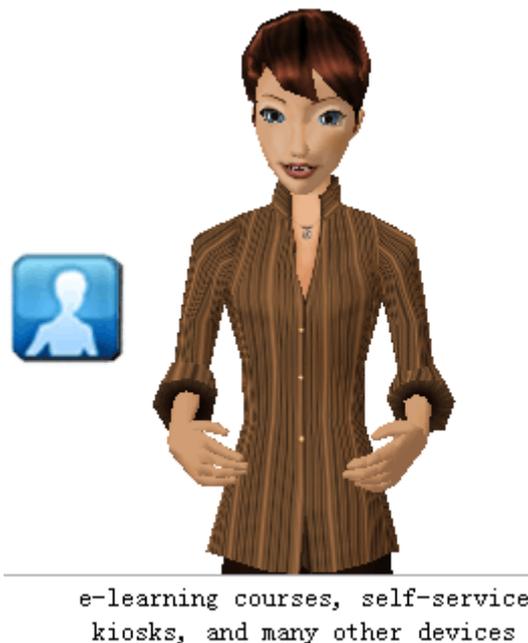


Figure 2 Multi-modal Simulated Translation Scenarios in Business English

3.2.4 Multi-modal Output in Business English Role Playing

Role-play is the most effective means of multi-modal output in business English teaching, which fully

demonstrates the student-center, and also reflects the students' language performance, multi-modal communicative ability and soft ability. Role-play includes impromptu performance and micro-video-based performance. In impromptu performances, teachers create lifelike language input environment, provide multi-modal language materials and business communication activities, such as business negotiation, business meeting, business reception, commodity design, business contract writing and translation, business talks, advertising, business letters, etc., and students discuss in groups, and role play on the spot. This activity focuses on developing the language competence necessary in daily international business, such as narration, expression, description, persuasion, debate, negotiation and defense. The role-play based on micro-video is new in the "micro-era" and multi-modal classroom, requiring students to have better information literacy. Before class, teachers provide multi-modal corpus materials and assign tasks. Students play the role by self-editing and self-directing individually or in groups, and then shoot micro-video, use "iJianji", "Corel Video Studio", "Premiere" and other editing software to complete post production, integrate text, image, audio, animation and other multi-modal elements symbols to show the business English seminars. The multi-modal output through role-playing is flexible, diverse and simulated. And it constructs the teaching model of "observation (input) - thinking - practice (output) - feedback", which helps students become experiencers, imitators and practitioners of knowledge and skills.

3.3.Multi-modal Evaluation System of Business English Classroom Teaching

Multi-modal evaluation refers to the multi-faceted communication and learning by means of images, words, colors, videos, sounds and other factors through visual, auditory, tactile and other senses, which is used to judge and evaluate a person. Based on output hypothesis, business English classroom teaching advocates multi-modal output and transformation, which evaluates not only students, but also the teaching content and mode. And the evaluation system mainly focuses on process evaluation and formative evaluation, supplemented by summative evaluation, struggling to realize the pluralism of evaluation subjects, the diversification of evaluation methods and the comprehensiveness of evaluation contents, so as to meet the requirements proposed by The National Criteria of Teaching Quality for Undergraduate Business English Majors i.e. business English students should possess the ability of language use, intercultural communication, critical thinking and innovation, business practice and self-learning.

3.3.1.Multi-modal Teaching Evaluation of Teachers

From the perspective of output-driven hypothesis, multi-modal teaching evaluation of teachers will be

conducted in terms of teaching mode, content and process. Multi-modal teaching model requires teachers to change the traditional teaching methods and models, change their roles and renew their teaching concepts. And it also advocates teachers should use scaffolding, heuristic, exploratory, seminar, participatory and problem-based teaching methods, build digital teaching resources by means of information technology, and construct a multi-modal, networked, digital teaching environment, so that students can participate in the teaching. With comprehensible output as the drive and goal, students can be the user of language, and further improve the mutual transformation of learning models. Multi-modal teaching content requires teachers to further refine textbooks and make multi-modal pan-PPT by modern educational technology. Based on the students' characteristics, teaching objectives and strategies, the teaching materials are selected and reorganized, and the lifelike discourse scenarios are created by a variety of symbolic elements such as text, image, audio, video, animation and network, providing multi-modal knowledge through visual, auditory and tactile senses, so as to stimulate students' multi-sensory participation and interest in learning. Multi-modal teaching process requires teachers to be organizers, collaborators and facilitators of the classroom. In order to help students to internalize knowledge and strengthen the construction of knowledge, teachers will use multi-modal pan-PPT to present teaching content, guide students to use multi-modal symbol output to improve their multi-modal communication ability, cultivate students' multi-literacy, develop multi-modal network interaction, and promote the transformation among multiple modes. In addition, teachers should strengthen communication with other teachers, find and solve problems through teachers' mutual evaluation and self-evaluation, so as to further improve the teaching quality.

3.3.2. Multi-modal Teaching Evaluation of Students

Variety in Evaluator

The traditional evaluation method ignores students' self-evaluation and mutual evaluation. Therefore, the traditional evaluator is relatively single. However, the evaluation of multi-modal teaching include students' self-evaluation and mutual evaluation in the group. Students' self-evaluation refers to their self-evaluation of the frequency of classroom participation, the quality of multi-modal interaction, the fit of group cooperation and attitudes, which pays attention to the self-reflection, self-cognition and self-regulation. Mutual evaluation in the group is that group members discuss, perform and complete certain tasks. The members evaluate each other, and then the group leader summarizes. The variety in evaluators encourages students to carry out self-evaluation and mutual evaluation, which can not only give full play to students, but also promote the communication

between teachers and students, students and students. And it also can effectively guarantee the fairness and impartiality of teaching, and protect students' enthusiasm.

Diversification of Evaluation Methods

Multi-modal teaching evaluation method adopts learning portfolio evaluation, follow-up evaluation and homework exhibition instead of evaluating students only through examination. And it mainly focuses on process evaluation and formative evaluation, supplemented by summative evaluation. By using a variety of evaluation methods, evaluation means and evaluation tools, students are encouraged to study with different models. And students' attitude, values, innovative consciousness and practical ability can be evaluated comprehensively.

Comprehensiveness in Evaluation Contents

In addition to academic achievement, attendance rate, classroom performance, teachers should test whether students are able to use multi-modal symbols to construct and express meanings and their multi-modal communicative competence through group activities, model dialogues, simulated classes, role-playing, speeches and debates., and evaluate them fairly, impartially and objectively, so as to cultivate students' comprehensive qualities such as practical ability, autonomous learning ability, critical thinking and innovative ability.

4. Multi-modal Classroom Teaching Practice with *Business English Correspondence* as an Example

Business English Correspondence is a core course for senior business English majors. It aims to cultivate the ability of business English students to write business English letters. Taking *Business English Correspondence* as an example, this chapter will introduce how teachers integrate listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating into the teaching to increase output, and guide students to analyze and solve problems. What's more, this chapter describes how to construct the multi-modal classroom teaching by virtue of modern educational technology, and combine input and output organically to improve students' abilities.

4.1. Design Concept

With the chapter of "Establishing Trade Relations" as the core, the information-based instructional design of *Business English Correspondence* is guided by situational cognition and constructivism theory. In view of the characteristics of English senior students, such as solid language foundation, strong thirst for knowledge, active thinking, wide vision, strong independent analysis and thinking ability, and eagerness to participate in classroom teaching, teachers can use case teaching method, situational teaching method and process genre method, combined with computer multimedia such as flash technology and cartoons, so as to give full play to students'

initiative, motivation and creativity and fully demonstrate the concept of “teacher-led and student-oriented”. Through the combination of inspiration, discussion and summary in classroom teaching, students can truly become the masters of the classroom. It can also improve the efficiency of teaching, effectively emphasize the key point of writing business letters and the difficulties in using typical sentence patterns, and realize the three teaching goals, that is, knowledge, ability and emotion. Therefore, it is an innovative attempt in the classroom teaching and helpful to construct a new business English writing teaching model in and out of class.

4.2. Multi-modal Classroom Teaching Practice

Multi-modal teaching content is the core, which refers to refine the teaching content, design the information-based teaching and integrate the multimedia elements such as text, graphics, images, video, audio and animation. By constructing virtual scenes, students interact with multi-modal teaching content, which makes business English writing more digital, diversified and structured.

This section takes the chapter of “Establishing Trade Relations” as the core to show how to design multi-modal courseware as follows.



figure 3 multi-modal teaching ware in BE correspondence

4.2.1. Multi-modal Input in Classroom Teaching

Considering that students lack trade knowledge, teachers can build a “Business English Teaching Network Platform”, develop a network course of Business English Correspondence , providing students with relevant videos and PDF texts in the course website about trade knowledge for pre-class preview.

Firstly, in the lead-in step, based on situational teaching method, the teacher use Flash to make the cartoon of importers and exporters looking for customers (see Figure 3), and create scenarios of establishing trade relations. By watching and listening to the video, that is, audio-visual input, students’ interest in learning will be stimulated. Secondly, the students are divided into two groups as the buyer and the seller. Thirdly, the teacher asks “How do the buyer and seller establish trade relations with customers by letters?” to guide students to think. Finally, the teacher records audio for listening input, provides students with the correct pronunciation and vocabulary related to the letter of establishing trade relations, and guides students to follow-up selectively. In addition, teachers can input vocabulary by using “electronic pen” to mark key and difficult words in sample letters and explain them synchronously. By using the genre approach in teaching, students can read the sample letters of “Establishing Trade Relations”, and master the overall framework of letters. Then, based on the case analysis, the teacher divides the sample letter into four parts and makes a comparative analysis, so as to deepen students’ impression on the letter. At the same time, teachers can design digital learning resources to realize multi-modal input according to teaching tasks, including websites, commonly used economic terms, business organization names and abbreviations, commonly used English vocabulary in foreign trade, English vocabulary in clothing, common English abbreviations in foreign trade and samples of English correspondence, so as to support the smooth classroom teaching activities.

4.2.2. Multi-modal Output in Classroom Teaching

Teachers test students vocabulary in words through quiz to strengthen students’ understanding of key vocabulary such as obtain, learn, through the courtesy of, leading exporter, etc., so as to lay a foundation for writing.

As for the typical sentence patterns such as “through the introduction of; we have learned your name and address.....; we specialize in; we look forward to” students can translate them orally, or fill in the blanks while learning. Through the activities such as writing and translating, students can better grasp the typical sentence patterns and accumulate sentence patterns for writing.

When analyzing the letter, the teacher guides students to participate in the classroom actively by asking questions, groups discussing and summarizing. Next, the teacher will take the first part of two sample letters as

an example.

We have obtained your name and address from Dee & Co. Ltd.

(Letter 1 from the importer) 我方从 Dee & Co. Ltd 公司处获得你方信息。

From the Commercial Counselor's Office of the US Embassy we have learned that you wish to import cotton bed-sheets and pillowcases from China.

(Letter 2 from the exporter)我方从美大使馆商赞处得知你方想从中国进口床上用品。

First, the teacher asks "How does the writers get information about their customers respectively?" According to the letter, the students can give the answer directly as follows, "The addresser tells the addressee that they get the information from Dee & Co. Ltd Company and Commercial Counselor's Office of the US Embassy respectively. Then the teacher asks "What are the problems to be solved in the first part of the two letters?", and guides students to answer in one sentence, hence solves the question of "how to get to know your client".

After the other parts have been studied in a similar way, the students can summarize the main ideas of each part in groups, and output them through presentation in class. In this way, the writing template of letters of "establishing trade relations" can be constructed, that is, the first part is about how to get customer's information; the second part is the introduction to the company; the third part is about the company's products; and the fourth part is the desire for cooperation.

In consolidation and practice, teachers use cartoons to present the situation and directly show the requirements. Students work in groups of three to five to play the roles of buyers and sellers, and discuss how to write the letter of "establishing trade relations" in groups, so as to achieve the output.

4.2.3. Multi-modal Teaching Evaluation

In-class and out-of-class evaluation refers to students' self-evaluation, students' mutual evaluation and mutual evaluation between teachers and students. Immediate writing is helpful not only for teachers to directly evaluate students' writing ability by virtue of templates, but also for students to enhance their error checking ability. And in this process, students' mutual evaluation and mutual evaluation between teachers and students can be used. After class, teachers can establish links with "Alibaba Website" and ask students to write letters of "Establishing Trade Relations" to real customers. By interacting with customers in real, students can evaluate the effectiveness of letter writing in the practice and further achieve the goal in this course.

In order to help students learn independently after class, consolidate knowledge, interact with teachers after class, and give feedback on learning, teachers can also design after-class activities such as “course announcement, Q&A and discussion, examination” on the online platform. By logging on to the platform, students can participate in question answering and discussions, submit homework, test online, and learn autonomously. And students’ online posting and testing can be tracked on the platform. Students can also submit their assignments online on the Correction Network. The process of “submitting homework - systematic modification - peer review - teacher review” in letters writing can improve the effectiveness of writing and realize the students’ mutual evaluation and mutual evaluation between teachers and students.

5. Conclusion

Multi-modal business English classroom teaching is a dynamic process, which is based on input and driven by output. It integrates various knowledge, and transforms knowledge into wisdom. It is a new attempt and exploration to apply new information technology and modern educational technology based on the traditional business English teaching model. Under the guidance of output-driven hypothesis, the multi-modal classroom teaching can be achieved by refining business English and using information-based teaching design. Driven by output, learners absorb and internalize the knowledge learned. At the same time, learners are encouraged to think positively and constantly reflect on their own language output. Finally, through their own efforts, they can reconstruct their knowledge and improve their comprehensive literacy.

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