

A Review of the Development and Research of Production Orientation Methods

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Abstract. The paper investigated Product Oriented Approach (POA), originally proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang in 2015, and sorted out the development of theoretical framework. In the meantime, the current empirical researches on POA from the perspectives of classroom practice and textbook compilation were examined and evaluated systematically. Through curriculum practice, it is found that POA has a good adaptability in multiple foreign languages teaching, but there are still some research gaps, which are worthy of further study by subsequent scholars.

Keywords: Product Oriented Approach, theoretical development, empirical research, classroom practice, textbook compilation.

1. Background

Put forward by Wen Qiufang, a Professor of Beijing Foreign Studies University, Product Oriented Approach (POA) is a proposed foreign language teaching method instilled with Chinese characteristics, in response to improving the practical English capability of Chinese college students majoring in English. For a long time, the mainstream English teaching mode in China has laid more emphasis on input than output. According to the English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors issued in 2000, English major courses are divided into skill courses and knowledge courses, among which single skill courses and comprehensive courses, including listening, reading and writing, account for about 65% of the total class hours.[1] Still, there are an array of graduates who are not qualified to competently use English at work. In order to change this situation, Wen put forward the “Output-driven hypothesis” in 2007, which on this ground, was combined with the Input hypothesis of Krashen (1985), whereby POA was constructed. It took the Output-driven and Input-Enabled” as the framework. This teaching method has witnessed 12 years’ evolvement, from establishment to gradual maturity, and has accumulated fruitful theoretical achievements as well as practical gains. This paper systematically introduced the theoretical framework and research status quos of POA teaching method, making an attempt to point out the deficiencies of the current research, and further, to proffer some references for the related research in the future.

2. Theoretical Researches on POA

As an innovative teaching method, Production Oriented Approach theory was brought up by Professor Wen in response to the college English teaching status quo in China. Although in the Postmethod Era, the academic studies having declared that methods have been “dead” since the 1990s, Wen believed that methods must exist and need innovation. On the basis of Output driven hypothesis and Output-driven and Input-Enabled hypothesis, Wen drew on the theories and experience of second language teaching and proposed Production Oriented Approach theory (POA) in 2015. POA is composed of teaching principle, teaching hypothesis and teaching process: teaching principle is the guiding ideology, teaching hypothesis is the theoretical basis, and teaching process is the realization process (according to figure 1.) (Wen 2015).

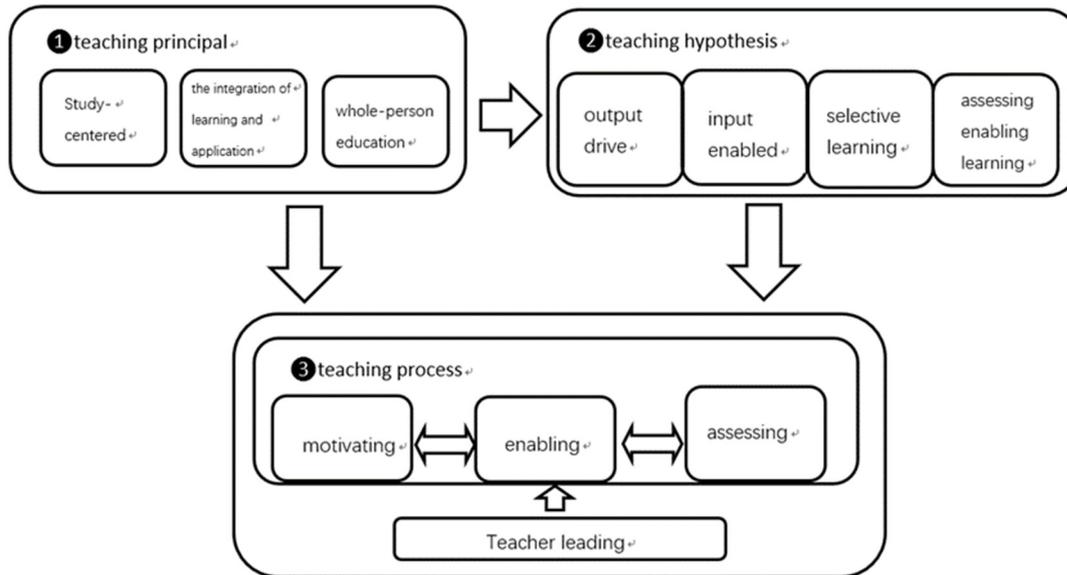


Figure 1. Theory Framework of POA

The teaching principles follows the three rules: learning centered teaching, learning-application integrated teaching and the whole person education. At the end of last century, the teaching concept of “student-centered” was introduced into China, which modified the “teacher-centered principle” that ignored the needs of students. However, with the development of the application of “student-centered” principle in the classroom, its disadvantages were gradually exposed, where the role of teachers was marginalized, student-led classroom was merely a form, and classroom teaching objectives were undervalued. The “teaching centered” principle came into being, paying attention to the effect of teaching and promote learning. POA aims to eliminate the cultivation of “dumb English” in language education and improve students' ability to use English comprehensively. The theory, therefore, attaches great importance to the integration of learning and application. The concept of “whole-person education” is based on the requirements of the Ministry of Education for the cultivation of college students' comprehensively all-round quality.

The teaching hypothesis includes four hypotheses: output drive, input enabling, selective learning and assessing enabled learning. “Output-driven” hypothesis was put forward by Wen (Wen 2013), which drew on both Krashen’s “Input Hypothesis” and Swain’s “Output hypothesis”. This was also known as a great innovation of POA. Just like Hahaoka mentioned, ‘noticing the hole’ serves as ‘an important stimulus for noticing the gap’. [2]When students pay attention to the limitation of their own ability in output, they will have the mind of seeking to make up for the dead zone of knowledge (Wen 2008).”Output-drive” theory can help teachers get rid of the shackle of cramming teaching and effectively stimulate students’ desire for knowledge and learning motivation. It is worth noting that “Output-driven” differs from the previous hypothesis since it is targeted at intermediate level teaching and advanced language learners with a level of language proficiency, and the skills involved include speaking, writing and translating

The teaching process of POA (FIG. 2) is different from the previous English teaching of Chinese college students. Its teaching mode is output (motivating) - input (enabling) - output (assessing). In the whole teaching process, teachers perform an intermediary role, to guide, design and scaffold in each section. The most creative part of POA is to set up communication scenes in the motivating section, presenting students with real scenes in life and discussing topics. Different from the traditional “input” as the beginning of teaching, POA chooses communicative scenes in line with teaching content, so that students can find deficiencies in the output process. Teachers deliberately create “hunger state”, and promote students’ learning. In the enabling part, POA theory believes that, due to the students’ level, input materials are suggested to be excellent works written by students rather than articles or speeches delivered by native English speakers. In this process, teachers mainly

function as scaffolding to render students help (Wen 2015). More often than not, in classroom teaching, a complete task needs to be divided into several sub-tasks, so the input section also needs to go through 2-3 rounds. The assessing is divided into immediate assessing and delayed assessing. That is, the immediate assessing is the checking part of the enabling process aiming at controlling the teaching progress, while the delayed assessing is aimed at the feedback of after-class exercises. Due to the limited time in classes, POA believes that it is inappropriate to place all assessments in the class.

process	teaching process	teaching requirement
driving	1 teacher presents communication scenes	communicative scenes and and cognitively challenging topics
	2 students try to complete social activities	Let the student realize the inadequacy of self language, produce study desire
	3 teacher explains teaching target and enabling assignment	Make students clear communication and language goals; Make the students clear about the type content of the production task
enabling	1 teacher describes production tasks	Make the students clearly understand the steps to complete the production task and the specific requirements of each step
	2 Students learn selectively and teacher provides instruct and examine	Enable students to select the content and language form or discourse structure required for the production task from the input
	3 Students practice production, teacher gives guidance and checks	Enable students to immediately apply the results of selective learning to production
delay assessment	1 Teacher and students learn assessment criteria together	Standard clear, easy to understand, easy to check
	2 Students submit their production	Clear deadline and form of submission
	3 Teacher and students assess the production in class	Effective use of time, specific requirements for the audience, teacher assessment targeted
	4 Teacher and students assess the production after class	Teachers and students jointly participate in the evaluation, and the production results submitted by students successively serve as the basis of formative evaluation

Figure 2. Teaching Procedures of POA

Aiming at enabling, the significant part of POA, Qiu Lin (2017) refined language enabling principles through class experiments: objects of language enabling have the characteristics of selectivity and functional relevance, types of which lay particular stress on the “output”; the process reflects the “progressive”, showing the basic thoughts of language enabling part in “proceduring” design, analyzing contribution to the teaching effect. Qiu (2019) took Wen(2015) ‘enabling effectiveness standard’ as the research object, and, through qualitative and quantitative research and analysis, discussed it from the perspectives of “gradualism”, “precision” and “diversity”, which indeed further enhanced the theoretical framework of effective enabling.

In terms of assessing, on grounds of the current status of limited class hours, Wen (2016) summarized the empirical study on assessment and put forward the concept of Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA), which is employed to the last section of POA in the teaching process; the object of assessment is the extracurricular assignments production of students; the main body of assessment is formed by students, teachers, machine automatic scoring system. The assessing method in class is the student-student or teacher-student cooperative assessing. Assessing content takes teaching objectives in each unit as the reference point, focusing on quality of communication, examining the application effect of language form and discourse structure acquired in the enabling phrase. It summarized the implementation steps and requirements and implementation concept, pointing out that the current TSCA is still in its infancy of the theoretical phase, lack of empirical research. Sun Shuguang (2017), based on Wen(2016) ideas of TSCA, carried out the class experiments for a semester, who, taking several rounds of reflection on the experiment into account, put forward the guidelines of assessment focus: typicality, gradualism and teachability, and specific practice of ‘teaching enabling studying’. At the same time Sun reported the feedback of students towards teaching effect and teachers’ introspection of TSCA.

Wen (2017) analyzed the Chinese characteristics of POA from the perspective of philosophical thought and theoretical support, whose sources included three aspects: the sinicized Marxist

philosophy, the traditional education literature *On Learning*, and the essence of Western curriculum theory and Second Language acquisition theory. The POA supported by the above philosophical thoughts and theories presents four characteristics. That is, it integrates the perspectives of curriculum theory and second language acquisition theory; it always insists practical materialism; it conforms to China's specific national conditions, applies measures comprehensively; it grasps the main aspects of classroom teaching contradiction, highlighting the leading role of teachers.

3. Empirical Researches of POA

The empirical research period of POA is relatively short, with only a few papers on 'Output-driven Hypothesis' before 2016. In 2016, POA theory has taken shape, and the empirical researches based on this teaching theory has increased rapidly. More than 120 relevant literatures and 37 core journals have been retrieved through China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CKNI), the main knowledge database in China. The research field was mainly focused on English language teaching.

3.1 Researches on Class Teaching

In the field of classroom teaching research of POA, the research mainly focused on the overall classroom practice research and single skill research, and the research scope was relatively comprehensive.

3.1.1 Overall Class Practice

A very important empirical study on the application of POA in class practice is to explore the effectiveness of this teaching methods, which not only exists in the study of English as the teaching object, but also is the main content of the empirical study on non-English subjects. Zhang Lingli (2017) tested the teaching effectiveness of POA via a one-semester teaching experiment, and discussed the problems which deserves attention in the implementation of POA as well as the future research direction. The results showed that compared with the control group, the overall English level of the experimental group was not significantly different. That is, firstly, the listening and writing performance was significantly improved, that of reading was significantly decreased, and the translation performance was not significantly changed. Secondly, the English proficiency of students in the experimental group improved significantly, while the English proficiency of students in the control group did not change significantly. Thirdly, the experimental group held a very positive attitude towards "output orientation", and their motivation to learn English was significantly enhanced. Non-English studies of POA focused on the teaching practice of seven languages, including Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL) and Malay. Wen (2018) applied POA to the study of TCSOL and pointed out the problems that cannot be neglected. Zhu Yong (2019) preliminarily proved the applicability of POA in the field of TCSL in accordance with the teaching practice of POA for 50 Malaysian students studying in China. Dong Xixiao (2019) employed POA to the classroom practice of Romanian language teaching and made teaching reflection and summary afterwards, pointing out that POA teaching in Romanian is both necessary and feasible despite its shortcomings. Wang Bo (2019) used POA teaching method to Korean language teaching. By designing a lesson plan and teaching practice, Wang found the applicability of POA to non-universal language teaching on the lower grades college students. Wang Dandan (2019) applied the POA in Indonesian audio-visual teaching and verified its applicability through classroom practice, teaching feedback and reflection.

In the field of overall class practice, Zhang Wenjuan (2016) designed and implemented a three-week POA teaching experiment with 2 class hours per week for 19 students in sophomore year of law major of China University of Political Science and Law, and gave teaching feedback and summary and reflection. The course selected 'Cultural Conflict in the Court' as the theme, setting the teaching task as pleading for the leader character Xu Weidong in the mock court with the background of the film *Gua Sha The Treatment*, and set the teaching goal as the dual goal of language and culture. After predicting the difficulty of the task, the teacher divided the overall task of the moot court into three sub-tasks: identifying cultural differences, introducing and explaining local culture and defending

local culture. In the teaching feedback, students mentioned that due to the refinement of teaching tasks and enrichment of the classroom, they gained so much and the class received a good response from peer evaluation in the classroom. In this sense, Zhang concluded that POA can effectively increase the vitality of the classroom and increase the opportunities for students to use the language, even though there are some difficulties in using it in the classroom. Yang Yanping (2016) conducted a two-semester POA teaching experiments in view of the current situation of low classroom efficiency and students' low capability in technical talent-oriented colleges. The experiment was guided by the theory of POA and Presentation-Assimilation-Discussion(PAD) class, which followed the principle of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, adhering to the essence of traditional teaching. It conducted classroom teaching experiments according to the teaching process of "high-frequency materials, explanation on text, review and extension of texts, picture description and dictation of vocabulary, imitation of compositions and evaluation of homework". The experiment showed that the class under the guidance of POA can adapt to students at different levels and effectively improve their English level. Li Zuo (2017) took the finance major of higher vocational college as the teaching object for one year. With the theme of "cultural connotation and translation skills of Chinese and English animal terms", Li conducted a two-week teaching experiment, two class hours each week and made a reflection and summary. The teaching process was basically the same as that of Zhang (2016). Accordingly, Li found that POA theory could be organically integrated with Flipped Classroom Pedagogy to promote students' English learning. Through analysis, Liu Lingyan (2018) found that POA and ESP were in line with each other in terms of educational concepts, and combined them. After learning about the requirements of the postgraduate courses of law major in 2017 based on a questionnaire survey, Liu conducted a one-semester (32 class hours) teaching experiment on legal English courses, which was conducted according to the three steps of "drive-enable-assess". Liu found that POA could promote the improvement of students' learning ability, promote the development of ESP teachers and improve teaching methods. Based on POA theory, Wang Yu et al(2019) attempted to design the teaching framework in combination with engineering ESP course, and pointed out its design concept, frame design and reflection so as to promote the combination of POA and ESP teaching. Meanwhile, on the basis of Ubiquitous Learning Study Mode of postgraduate English course English course for Academic Purpose, there was also research showing that this application can greatly promote students' overall English level, especially in reading comprehension, academic translation and writing.

3.1.2 Single Language Skills

The researches on single skill was mainly pertinent to writing and speaking, and the subject field of single skill research was only limited to English at present. Zhang Wenjuan (2017) found that the teaching of English writing, under the guidance of the POA theory, could improve students' language application ability through a controlled experiment after a two-week test. In line with the theory of POA, Zhang Yi & Tao Jun (2018) provided afterclass writing tutoring for 30 students for ten consecutive weeks of writing. He analyzed writing ability change path analysis, and it found that students' overall writing capacity is improving, while the change of capability was not affected by the content or ways. In general, the change path followed 'vocabulary-grammar-cohesion-content-logic' pattern, which inspired English writing teaching content and teaching arrangement and design. In terms of spoken English courses, Qi Ping (2016) found that the application of POA based on the teaching experiments of three semesters can activate the English language knowledge that students have input, stimulate students' desires to apply language knowledge and skills in real language environment, which further enhances students' interest and confidence in doing work in English. To some extent, it can improve the efficiency of students' selective language output and boost the improvement of students' oral output ability. Wang Bojia (2019) integrated Paul - Elder speculative model (PEM) and Wen's theory of POA, conducted experiment in speculative "integration" oral class, using the form of questionnaires and theoretical review in writing. The study showed that POA can effectively improve sorting ability, also can from the clarity, relevance, logic and profundity of the four dimensions to improve students' writing capability in argumentative essays.

3.2 Textbook Compilation

The researches of the textbook compilation from POA perspective only involved English, TCSOL, German and Malay. In terms of the compilation of English teaching materials, *i English*, which has been published, was written specifically aligned with the POA teaching method. Chang Xiaoling (2017) proposed “Teaching theory-Action research” Integrated Model by analyzing the compilation process of *i English*, and expounded the interaction between theory and practice in the compilation process. From the angle of outlines and compilation of teaching material, and publication concept, some scholars introduced *Reading in Chinese Culture*, combining POA with Chinese traditional Culture in the college English teaching, which pointed out the specialties in emphasizing on cultivating the key ability training of students. It facilitated the innovation the textbook compilation, where various foreign languages teaching methods were made full use of, and the characteristics of English talents training are taken into account (Zhang Qing, Zhang Lu, 2018). Similarly, in light of POA framework, Bi Zheng(2019) used the dialectical research examining the usage of POA teaching materials by different teachers through two rounds of teaching experiments. In the first round, he focused on the process of teachers’ POA teaching material use, while in the second round, how teachers collaboratively developed various key abilities of students’ through the usage of teaching material of POA were stressed, which acted as guidance and inspiration to novice teachers. In the field of compiling teaching materials for TCSOL, Gui Jing (2018), guided by the principles of “appropriateness of output target” and “effectiveness of enabling activities” , discussed the process of compiling teaching materials in terms of unit structure, new vocabulary, grammar and exercise design after a four credit-hour teaching practice. Hence, suggestions for textbook alteration were put forward in this research. Zhan Xia (2019) gave reflective suggestions on the teaching design of the enabling section in the compilation of German textbook, and discussed the application of POA theory in German teaching through the change of textbook and practice design. Likewise, Shao Ying (2019) combined POA teaching method with Malay. She adapted textbook, and further elaborated the design and implementation of the enabling section from three aspects, namely, communicative authenticity, cognitive challenge and appropriateness of output target. This made up the implicitness of the unclear output target, missing link in enabling section of the original textbook and solved the problem of “separating learning from application”. Jiang Xiaoxiao (2019) combined POA with Sinhala, compiled the textbook of a lesson in Sinhala written by Hao Weimin in 1992, and designed the output task, which inspired the application of POA output teaching task towards non-general language teaching of students who are in lower grades at college.

4. Conclusion

According to the current research situation, the research on POA has involved many aspects, including not only theoretical researches, but also empirical researches, involving the teaching of other languages, apart from general English teaching. As an innovative teaching method, POA witnesses only a history of over ten years’ development, whose theory has made certain achievements. However, some problems also worthy of our special attention, such as the influence of POA on long-term teaching practice, the diversified development of POA textbooks and the role of POA in the improvement of individual skills in non-English subjects. The researches on these fields are still in the blank or infancy stage. In other words, there are still great room for POA researches in the future, not only in terms of theoretical development, but also in terms of empirical employment.

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