Giving Full Play to the Teachers' Leading Function and Comprehensively Promoting the Effective College English Class Based on POA

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ABSTRACT

As the practice subject, the teacher and the students really know whether a teaching model or practice is effective or not. The teaching practice of the author proves that: 1) Production Oriented Approach (POA), a theory system based on the teaching practice of China and absorbing the findings of many experts in linguistic and education, can guide the teaching practice effectively; 2) Effective classroom teaching requires the leading function of teachers; 3) "Input Enabling", one of the three teaching hypothesis of "POA", may demonstrate the leading function of teachers better when it is interpreted as "Overall Enabling".

Keywords: *POA; Effective teaching and learning; Leading function of teachers; Overall enabling*

1. INTRODUCTION

College English, as a public basic course for college students, has a large number of learners, a wide range of subjects and a great influence. Improving college English teaching continuously is required to comprehensively improve the quality of higher education [1]. With the adjustment of student training programs in colleges and universities, it has become a common phenomenon that college English class hours and weekly classroom teaching frequency are greatly reduced in recent years. How to ensure the teaching quality in the current adjustment has become a hot topic for college English teachers. Classroom is the main place for Chinese college students to learn English, which requires teachers to master effective classroom teaching strategies under the guidance of an effective theoretical system, thus improving classroom teaching effect and teaching quality more effectively.

2. EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND POA THEORY SYSTEM

2.1. The connotation of effective teaching and the present situation of college English classroom

Effective teaching is to promote students' learning and development. In other words, effective teaching is the teaching that promotes students' learning and development through effective teaching preparation, effective teaching activities and effective teaching evaluation [2].

Specifically, effective teaching means that students have made specific progress or development after a period of teaching (i.e., whether students have progress or development is the only indicator of teaching effectiveness) [3].

Accordingly, it is not difficult to find that there are still a lot of ineffective or inefficient classroom practices. The language knowledge teaching is still more important than the cultivation of ability. Insufficient attention has been paid to the cultivation of students' independent thinking ability and problem-solving ability, and due attention has not been paid to the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability. As a result, it is still difficult for students to use English effectively after many years of English learning. To a certain extent, they are still learning for examination, which has lost the "instrumental" role as the pillar of college English.

In order to construct more effective classroom teaching, the majority of front-line teachers need an effective and operational theoretical system to guide their teaching practice.

Allan et al. reviewed the literature on effective teaching in colleges and universities in the previous 30 years and summarized the effectiveness of effective teaching for learning into four areas: offering a supportive learning environment, effective teaching behavior, having high expectations for students and offering scaffolding to support learning [4]. This has a lot common ideas with the theoretical system of "production-oriented approach".

2.2. The "production-oriented approach" theoretical system

The production-oriented approach (POA) theoretical system established by Professor Wen Qiufang has gone

through multiple cycle interaction of "theory-practice-interpretation", and gradually improved

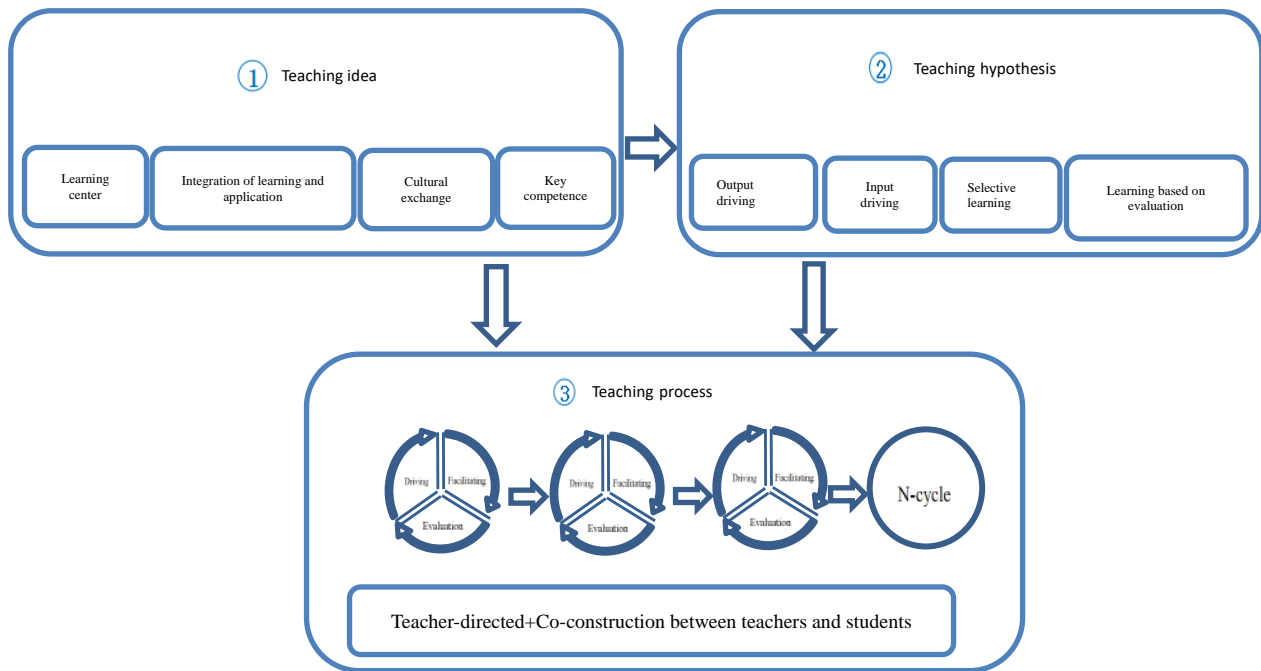through five stages: warm-up, rudiment, formation, revision and revision [5].

Figure 1. POA theoretical system [6]

POA is composed of three parts, and the first part "teaching idea" is the guiding ideology of the second part "teaching hypothesis" and the third part "teaching process", which determines the direction and overall goal of classroom teaching. The second part "teaching hypothesis" is the theoretical basis of each link in classroom teaching, which needs to be tested separately. The third part "teaching process" is not only the carrier to realize "teaching idea" and test "teaching hypothesis", but also the steps and means to realize POA teaching objective [7].

2.3. POA support for effective classroom teaching

The concept of "Learning Center" advocated by POA claims that classroom teaching must achieve teaching objectives and facilitates effective learning [5]. The occurrence of effective learning is not only the key to construct effective classroom, but also the criterion to evaluate the classroom effectiveness. Under the current situation that college English classes are generally greatly compressed, the occurrence of effective learning is particularly important and urgent. This is also the foothold and goal of this study.

The occurrence of effective learning is not only the proposition of "learning centered theory", but also the key to the expression of "integration of learning and application" and "whole person education theory". "Integration of learning and application" advocates that all

language teaching activities are closely connected with application in classroom teaching, so that there is no boundary between "learning" and "using", and "learning" and "using" are integrated. No matter the English level is high or low, using "integration of learning and application" should be able to do things in English [5]. However, the seemingly simple and direct goal of "doing things in English" is still very difficult for many students. If students can use English, the "instrumental" of college English will naturally be reflected, and the effectiveness of the classroom will be self-evident.

2.4. POA teaching practice enlightenment

The current situation is that the total class hours and weekly classroom learning frequency are greatly reduced (from 18 weeks per semester, 4 class hours per week to 16 weeks per semester, 2 class hours per week). In order to ensure the teaching quality and students' English level, the author's university in Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai) has adopted the POA theoretical system in the first-year college English (general English) teaching since the autumn semester of 2015. In the past four years, both the passing rate of CET-4 in the first semester and the total passing rate one year later have remained relatively stable, indicating that the new teaching system effectively offsets the substantial reduction in-class hours and frequency.
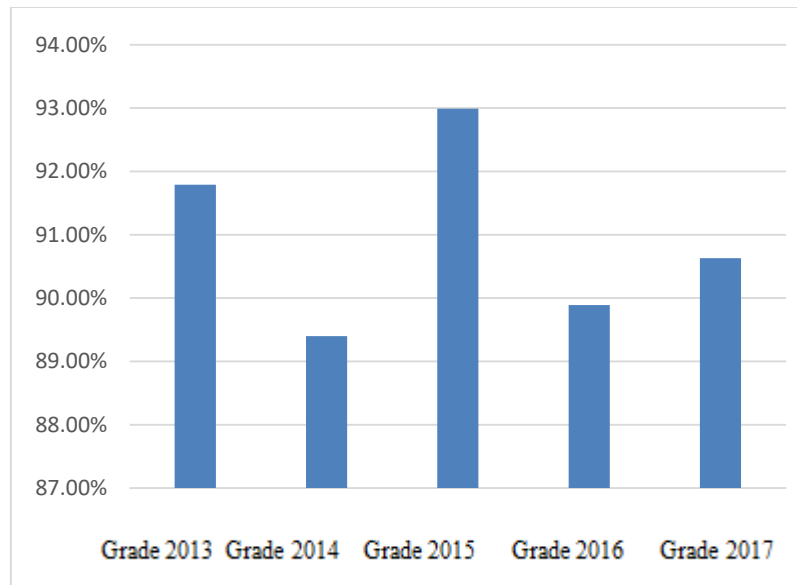
Figure 2. One time pass rate of CET-4 in Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai)

On the other hand, most of the teachers' feedback shows that the POA theory system can adapt to the existing college English teaching environment and effectively promote teaching. The interview shows that some teachers who have doubts about POA are due to they have not implemented the POA teaching process in the teaching process, and continue to implement the previous teaching methods under the condition of using new teaching materials. There is more emphasis on vocabulary, syntax and textual understanding, or omits the key point of "doing things in English".

Reflecting on the four cycle teaching practice, the author believes that as a new foreign language classroom teaching theory, teachers must carry out relevant theoretical study to accurately grasp the classroom teaching process in order to obtain good teaching effect. On the other hand, grasping the key points in teaching process will directly affect the final teaching effect.

With regard to teaching and learning process, excluding the differences between students' English foundation, the author believes that the key to ensure the effectiveness of classroom teaching is to play the leading role of teachers and promote the whole teaching process.

3. TEACHER-DIRECTED AND COMPREHENSIVELY FACILITATING

In teaching, teachers are not only the impartator of knowledge, but also the organizer, supervisor and encourager of teaching activities. The teacher is the dominant player in the classroom, whose leading role is embodied in the realization of students' effective learning (i.e., the "learning center theory" in the POA teaching hypothesis. POA teaching in every stage must give full play to the teachers' leading role [7]. Teachers play a leading role in every stage of the whole teaching process.

POA teaching process includes three stages: driving, facilitating and evaluating. The effective facilitation in this work runs through the whole teaching process, including curriculum guidance facilitation, unit learning facilitation, as well as the "facilitation" stage in POA teaching process (i.e., output teaching facilitation and evaluation facilitation). The effective integration and cooperation of these four levels ultimately contributes to the effective completion of output tasks, as well as the improvement of students' thinking and problem-solving abilities. It also concretely embodies the "teacher-directed" in the POA theory system.

### 3.1. Course guidance facilitates: understanding and acceptance

POA is a new teaching method, which requires students to overcome fixed thinking and practice inertia. Therefore, teachers must spend enough time to "guide" students before implementing POA [5]. The author's teaching practice shows that the favorable time for implementing POA teaching is freshman. Freshmen have different expectations for the learning environment, content and methods, and they are also willing to accept new and challenging contents and methods. Once the new concept is accepted, it will be relatively easy to implement.

Teachers' understanding of POA will directly affect students' acceptance and the follow-up learning effect. The author conducted two teaching effect surveys in 2017 (for 2016 students) and 2019 (for 2018 students), and the results clearly show the importance of curriculum guidance.

Question: How well do you master the objectives and tasks in college English classroom teaching?
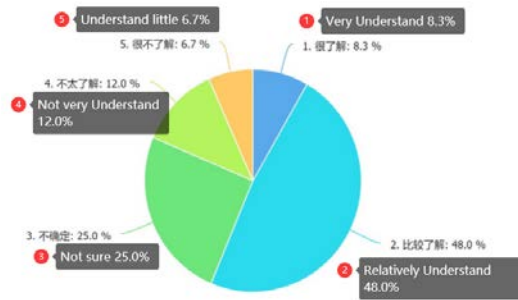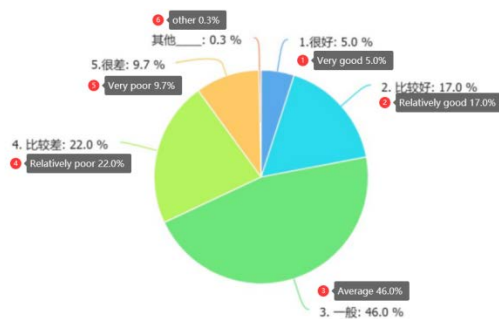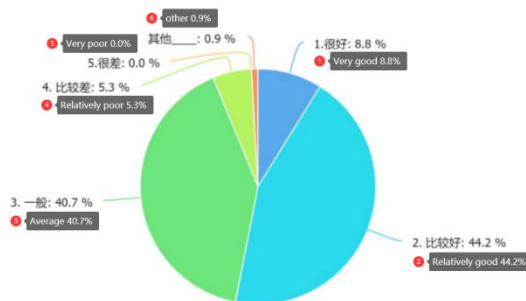

Results of 2017
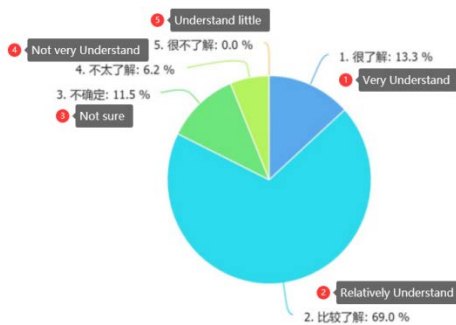
Results of 2019

Question: what do you think of the effect in college English learning at present?

Results of 2017

Results of 2019

The survey in 2017 is aimed at the students of grade 2016 (i.e., the students who adopt POA teaching in the first round). As the teachers have just contacted the theoretical system, they do not have a deep understanding on teaching concept, teaching hypothesis and teaching process, and the course guidance and unit guidance are not in place. The direct reaction is that nearly half of the students do not grasp the classroom teaching objectives and the tasks they need to complete, and finally nearly 80% of the students are not satisfied with the learning effect.

The survey in 2019 focuses on the students who implement the third round of POA teaching. With the in-depth understanding of relevant theories by teachers and the growth of teaching experience, students' mastery of classroom teaching objectives and tasks to be completed has significantly improved, and their satisfaction with learning effect has also increased to nearly 85%.

Course guidance should clearly guide students to understand the basic theory of POA, the basic process of class, the basic tasks of teachers and students respectively, the standards and methods of assessment and evaluation, and demonstrate their specific practices. Students can clearly understand that college English learning under POA will no longer be a classroom for words, grammar, text comprehension and practice in high school, which will become the basic language basis for successful completion of POA class. The successful completion in each unit output task needs to complete the content, language form and discourse structure according to different themes and task forms.

Course guidance needs to complete its own course effect evaluation. For example, students are required to prepare for the group report at the beginning of learning guidance. At the end of the course, students are required to complete the group report based on the checklist prepared by the teacher before class. The checklist should contain the basic points and the requirements of the mastery level. It can not only test students' understanding on POA course, but also let students understand the basic process of POA course.

3.2. Unit guidance facilitates: motivation and strategy

Gardner divides the motivation of second language acquisition into integrative motivation and instrumental motivation [8]. Integrative motivation stems from a desire to integrate into the target language culture. Learners have some knowledge or special interest in the target language community and expect to participate in the social life and learning of the target language community. Instrumental motivation refers to learners' desire to learn the target language as a tool to achieve a certain goal, such as obtaining economic benefits or other benefits, passing a certain exam, finding a good job, promotion, etc.

A prominent feature of POA teaching is to add output driving link. Specifically, the classroom teaching practice is to set up a vivid and interesting scene with real-life for students at the beginning of the course, so that students can

naturally integrate into it and try to use the existing language reserve for trial output. This tentative output process is what Gardner called the formation of inclusive motivation. Cao Zhixi's research shows that "integrative motivation learners can better use learning strategies, which helps to improve their English proficiency to a higher level" [9].

3.3. Output teaching facilitates: potentiation and improvement

Based on cognitive theory, English learning is the process of integrating new and old language knowledge, and also the process of language ability transforming from theoretical knowledge to automatic application [10]. This combination and transformation can only be realized through students' own practical activities. The ultimate goal of language learning is to use it. Students should not only master the language knowledge, but also transform the language knowledge into the practical communicative ability to use the language (i.e., the ability to apply what they have learned). Application is the end result of language learning and the guarantee of language learning success. It is also the key to the effective implementation of POA theory system in teaching practice.

In order to cope with the college entrance examination, Chinese students in senior high school have already undergone a considerable amount of vocabulary and reading training, and laid a good foundation. A considerable number of students have the potential to use the English language well, yet what they lack is proper guidance and proper application field. This is the responsibility of college English teachers and the embodiment of their leading role. For a long time, college English teaching has been criticized as time-consuming and inefficient. One of the most important factors is that it does not solve the problem of students' language use.

Based on the realization of students' effective learning, POA teaching offers a good solution to this problem. In the teaching process, the goal is to complete the unit output items - writing, presentation, debate, etc. Students are instructed in selective learning based on textual understanding. The teacher will give full play to the leading role from three aspects: structure, content and language. Students are guided to find the gaps in information, skills and language in the unfinished tasks. They are fully tapping the language potential, apply the learned contents to the output tasks, make up for the deficiencies, and realize "learning while using, integration of learning and application". Based on the successful completion of several effectively connected sub-tasks, the unit project is finally completed, and the language application ability and problem-solving ability are improved.

3.4. Assessment facilitates: reflection and solidification

Assessment is an indispensable part in the teaching. Scientific evaluation results can offer useful feedback for teaching, help teachers understand the teaching effect, improve teaching methods and improve teaching quality. It can also help students understand their own learning situation, improve learning methods and improve learning efficiency. Teaching assessment includes not only the final assessment for reaching standardized tests, but also the formative assessment for the purpose of learning and focusing on the learning process [11]. Final evaluation usually takes students' academic performance as the evaluation object at the end of the semester to offer firm evaluation for students' previous study. Final assessment is an important means to test teaching results, yet it can't evaluate the teaching process, and formative assessment makes up for this deficiency.

POA teaching attaches particular importance to the effective evaluation of students' output results [6]. Teaching practice shows that POA's emphasis on effective evaluation of output results well reflects the process and value of formative evaluation. POA starts from output and ends at output. The unit project output depends on the effective completion of multiple sub-tasks, both of which are accompanied by evaluation. Thus, "progressive formative assessment that offers appropriate feedback for students can have a strong and positive impact on teaching production" [12]. The reflection on the teaching quality is the effective reflection of the teaching quality.

POA evaluation includes not only the quality evaluation of unit project and its sub-task, but also the mastery evaluation of task completion methods and patterns. Teaching practice shows that POA teaching mode has higher requirements for students' autonomous learning ability. It is necessary to let students understand the importance of methods and models through formative assessment in daily teaching, as well as the inadequate mastery of methods in the process of task completion. Therefore, the basic model of problem-solving is constantly formed and solidified, and finally, the corresponding ability development is promoted.

4. CONCLUSION

Classroom is the main battlefield for teachers to teach and educate students. Effective college English classroom is not only reflected in the effective teaching and mastering of English language and culture, but also reflected in the cultivation of people.

The POA of "learning by use, learning for use, learning to apply, and learning for achievement" decomposes a large output task into several sub-tasks. Each sub-task needs to be prepared from the content, structure and language dimensions, and completed with joint efforts between teachers and students. Both the author's teaching reflection and students' feedback show that the preparation,

completion, evaluation and reflection process of sub-tasks and the total tasks synthesized by them is a training and cultivation process for problem-solving ability and effective thinking mode. Gradual progress will develop the transferable ability, and the cultivation of students will therefore have more far-reaching significance and influence than language learning itself.

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