



A Study on the Development of the Ability to Use Prefabricated Chunks in Spoken English of Vocational College Students from the Perspective of "Production-oriented Approach"

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Abstract. Based on the theory of "Production-oriented Approach"(POA) and the characteristics and teaching objectives of prefabricated chunks, this article proposes to build a task-driven chunk teaching model in oral teaching. From a macro level, it elaborates on the three teaching cycles of "chunk motivating -- chunk enabling -- chunk assessing", and conducts a case analysis on the second cycle, which is considered the most important part in classroom teaching. Through the practice of this model, we aim to help students develop an awareness of chunks and develop a habit of oral expression in sentences and even texts based on prefabricated chunks.

Keywords: Production-oriented Approach; Prefabricated Chunks; Spoken English; Teaching Practice

1 Introduction

Prefabricated chunks, as a significant language phenomenon that accounts for 70% of natural discourse, have the characteristics of overall storage and easy extraction, which greatly promote second language output. Widdowson [1] observed that communicative competence is not just about using a series of rules to combine sentences and words into sentences, but more about the ability to utilize prefabricated chunks stored in the brain. Cultivating students' awareness and ability of language chunks can not only improve the efficiency of language resource information processing and alleviate their anxiety, but also improve the accuracy and fluency of language output. Therefore, based on the characteristics of chunks and their widespread distribution in language, scholars have regarded the ability to use chunks as an important indicator for evaluating English oral performance. Zheng Xinning [2] has explored a teaching model that focuses on communicative situations, lists relevant language chunks about the situation, and provides example sentences. Shen Dongzhen [3] found that when learners significantly improve their mastery of chunk types, they can easily develop their ability to produce chunks and master vocabulary in English speaking. It is worth noting that Bai

Youfeng [4] explored the teaching design of a chunk-oriented teaching method in oral English, explaining the teaching objectives, teaching process, and case analysis under this method. However, she did not elaborate on the task-driven chunk teaching model from the perspective of POA at the macro level. Therefore, this study attempts to combine the theory of POA with the theory of chunk teaching, explore a task-driven chunk teaching model in oral teaching, and study the three teaching cycles of “chunk motivating -- chunk enabling -- chunk assessing”. At the same time, emphasis is placed on the “chunk enabling” cycle, in which the teacher provides input materials based on language chunks, integrates knowledge and skill training and conducts an empirical research to examine the development of prefabricated chunks in oral English among vocational college students under this model.

2 Theoretical Basis for Applying POA

There are the following theoretical foundations for studying the development of chunk ability from the perspective of POA. Firstly, POA advocates “learning-using integration”, emphasizing the continuous cycle of “output-input-output” in teaching, with output activities running through the entire teaching process. This is consistent with the goal of developing students' ability to produce chunks in oral communication. Secondly, Professor Wen Qiufang's Input enabled Hypothesis proposes that, under output driven conditions, providing appropriate input that can facilitate output in a timely manner can achieve better learning outcomes compared to not providing it [5]. As a teaching element, language chunks can be divided into aggregate words, habitual collocations, idioms, phrase structure chunks, and sentence structure frameworks. This type of language material has different difficulty levels and relatively complete structure and meaning. Therefore, it can be used as appropriate input materials, making it easy to implement several cycles composed of “motivating, enabling and assessing” in teaching, making different teaching stages highly correlated, and also helping students accurately identify their output difficulties. In multiple teaching cycles, the ability to use different types of chunks can be improved. Therefore, there is a strong fit between the POA and the research on the ability to use chunks in spoken English.

3 The Construction of “Task-Driven Chunk Teaching Model” in Spoken English

The task-driven chunk teaching model emphasizes the motivating, enabling and assessing of teaching based on chunks. It aims to improve students' ability to use language chunks in their spoken English through three major stages: pre-class driving and output, in-class chunk driving, enabling and assessing in small tasks, and overall chunk assessing, thereby promoting the development of their oral ability. It should be noted that before conducting this teaching experiment, the teacher should explain the basic knowledge of language chunks, such as their concept and classification, to help students recognize the enormous role of chunks in promoting their oral ability.

3.1 Chunk motivating

In the overall motivating stage, the teacher describes the oral scenario and assigns output tasks by defining the four major elements of topic, purpose, identity, and occasion. POA advocates using output activities with potential communicative value to drive students' desire to express. In English classrooms in a foreign language environment, teachers can assign output tasks based on topics in textbooks or select topics that students have a desire to share. After students submit their oral assignments, the teacher selects typical samples and presents reference samples to draw students' attention on the differences in the use of chunks between the two samples, and help them recognize the shortcomings in their ability to produce chunks. This feeling of "hunger" stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning chunks and their willingness to produce chunks.

3.2 Chunk enabling

In the enabling stage, the teacher first presents the students with chunk-based input materials, including textbook articles and "teaching micro books" prepared by the teacher. Then, students engage in selective learning of materials, with a focus on searching, paying attention to, and identifying chunks, and completing some output sub-tasks to consolidate their understanding of those chunks; On this basis, emphasis is placed on the internalizing training of chunks and the accuracy of their forms. Teachers can use examples of chunk sentences and design sub-tasks such as oral and written translation to facilitate the correct form of chunks; Finally, based on the correct use of language chunks, students try to construct topic structures, and produce paragraphs or passages through imitation or self-expression structures. At this stage, teachers mainly play the role of scaffolding.

3.3 Chunk assessing

In the assessing stage, the focus is on evaluating the quantity and quality of language chunks used by students. The teacher should examine the use of language chunks from the perspectives of their content, form accuracy and whether they are relevant to the topic. At the same time, the teacher can pay attention to the abilities of transferring chunks. From the perspective of POA, chunk assessing requires teachers to prepare adequately based on the pre-class output of students in order to efficiently implement collaborative assessing between teachers and students. After students submit the output results after the enabling activities, the teacher selects typical samples again according to the standard of chunks, designs the key points and processes of teacher-student cooperation evaluation in class, prepares relevant exercises, and strengthens and consolidates the key and difficult points that arise in the assessing process. At the same time, by citing the scoring methods of communicative oral tests, the positive effects of this model on students' oral abilities is assessed.

4 The Practice of Task-Driven Chunk Teaching Model

4.1 Research questions

(1) Can the Task-Driven Chunk Teaching Model increase the number of chunks in students' oral expression?

(2) Can the Task-Driven Chunk Teaching Model improve the quality of chunks in students' oral expression?

(3) Can the Task-Driven Chunk Teaching Model improve oral communication ability?

4.2 Research subjects

The research students are freshmen in the 22nd grade, and the experimental teaching lasts for 15 weeks. The students take the English grading test upon enrollment and are divided into English A and B classes based on their grading test scores. The students involved in this study are two A-class students, totaling 123. The weekly class hours for spoken English are 2, involving 3 oral topics.

4.3 Data collection

The experimental data focuses on two outputs of students in the pre-class driving and after the enabling stage, and analyzes the changes in the quantity and quality of text chunks, and oral ability between the two outputs to assess the effectiveness of this model. During the experiment, students' oral materials are first transcribed and then manually annotated, including the annotation on the accuracy and the relevance of the topic. The corpus was retrieved by the Antconc.

4.4 Teaching Case Analysis

A task-driven chunk training model is implemented for students in their oral classes. At the beginning of teaching, students acquire the definition, classification, and role of chunks, and their chunk awareness is initially cultivated. The teacher should design task chains based on chunk production, following the teaching steps of "chunk motivating - chunk enabling -- chunk assessing" and integrating knowledge and training related to chunks. Besides, draw students' attention on the understanding of the content of chunks, the accurate forms of chunks, and the discourse structure of oral expression to complete the oral training of "language chunks-- sentences--discourse".

Given that "enabling" is the primary stage of teaching, "assessing" is the sublimation stage of teaching [6], this section focuses on the enabling teaching of one spoken topic under the task-driven chunk teaching model. The topic of oral communication is "hobbies", taken from Unit 1 of the student textbook. Due to the lack of mutual understanding among freshmen in the 22nd grade, the teacher designed a scenario of an English class meeting, and required students to prepare self-introductions as an instructor. The students should focus on their hobbies and the benefits and complete output task 1. In

the following classroom enabling section, the teacher first chose the targeted chunks of the topic based on the outputs submitted by the students before class, including (1) aggregation words: for instance, in addition, in conclusion (2) habitual collocations: mental health, get fit and done, engage in a hobby, explore our interests, enrich our lives, develop new skills, pass the time (3) phrase structure chunks: an essential part of~, A sense of relaxation, a new way to~, unusual hobbies (4) sentence structure framework: engaging in a hobby allows sb to~, hobbies serve as~, when it comes to~, hobbies can contribute to~. These chunks cover two output task topics: Output Task 1: Introduce one's hobbies and the benefits they bring; Output task 2: Introduce an unusual hobby of classmates and discuss the significance of this hobby.

Enabling of Chunks.

Due to the diversity of chunks, this section focuses on students' selective learning of four types of language chunks: aggregated words, habitual collocations, phrase structure chunks, and idioms. Among them, the habitual collocation and phrase structure chunks related to hobbies are the key and difficult points to be enabled in this part. The difficulty for students to learn habitual collocations, especially the collocations involved verbs and nouns is that they are prone to produce Chinese-style collocations, which is due to the lack of learning scenarios for verbs; For phrase based chunks, most students have insufficient vocabulary or phrase-based structures due to a lack of diverse learning of nouns. Therefore, the enabling exercises in this section mainly include:(1) identifying the four types of chunks in teacher's samples and textbook articles and doing classification exercises; (2)Using Antconc to search for the key words in habitual collocations and phrase structure chunks in teaching micro books to learn more scenarios of this chunk. Taking "a new way to~" as an example, sentences can be retrieved like "Marketers see it as a new way to engage with consumers ; I can always use a new way to use my canned meat; Invent a new way to manifold DNA to diagnose genetic issues?" and so on. Besides, the teacher designs exercises such as filling in the blanks with the first letter of the chunk and translation to help students learn the content and form of the target chunks.

Enabling of Sentences.

This section focuses on the learning of sentence structure chunks and guides students to flexibly apply the first four types of chunks to this procedure and attempt to produce complete sentences related to hobbies. For example: Engaging in a hobby allows us to develop new skills and explore our interests; Hobbies serve as an essential part of our lives. Teachers can also design exercises such as sentence rewriting and translation to help students internalize target language chunks.

Enabling of Oral Discourses.

The enabling of oral discourse units mainly refers to the practice of filling the target language chunks into the gaps in the discourse according to prompts. This kind of exercise further increases the difficulty of language processing and helps students gain a

deeper understanding of the scenarios of target language chunks. On the basis of completing enabling procedure, the teacher assigns output task 2 to encourage students to use targeted language chunks to complete it. Moreover, they can transfer their chunk abilities to new oral tasks. After completing the recording of Task 2, students will upload it to the enterprise WeChat teaching group for transcription. Finally, the recording and text version will be uploaded to the Learning Platform so that both the teachers and classmates can listen to or read the outputs.

In terms of designing chunk enabling procedure, the teacher designs different levels of chunk exercises based on students' outputs and difficulties, which increases the frequency of target chunk occurrence and helps students engage in effective selective learning, providing targeted scaffolding for students to complete output tasks [7].

5 Case Results and Discussion

5.1 Data Analysis

After 15 weeks of teaching practice on three oral topics, it was found that 6 students had extreme scores. Therefore, a total of 117 students were collected for further statistical analysis of their language chunks in output tasks 1 and 2. The focus includes the quantity of target chunks produced and the accurate quantity of target chunks used. Paired sample T-test was performed on two sets of data. From Table 1, it can be seen that the mean number of chunks in Task 1 is 3.91, and the mean number of chunks in Task 2 is 5.49; $t=-3.3$ and $p<0.05$; From Table 2, it can be seen that the mean number of accurate chunks in Task 1 is 3.03, and the mean number of accurate chunks in Task 2 is 5.26; $t=-4.6$ and $p<0.05$; The results showed that both the number and the accurate number of target language chunks in Task 2 were significantly higher than those in Task 1, indicating that the task-driven chunk teaching model can effectively improve the quantity and quality of prefabricated chunks. Figure 1 shows the comparison of the average scores of Task 1 and Task 2 in three output tasks. It can be seen that as the quality and quantity of language chunks used by students increases, their overall oral performance also improves accordingly. Therefore, this model can effectively improve students' oral communication ability.

Table 1. data analysis 1

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
mean number of chunks in Task 1	3.91	117	1.121	.190	-3.296	.002
mean number of chunks in Task 2	5.49	117	2.293	.388		

Table 2. data analysis 2

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
mean number of accurate chunks in Task 1	3.028571	117	1.4635713	.2439285	-4.597	.000
mean number of accurate chunks in Task 2	5.257143	117	2.2846426	.3807738		

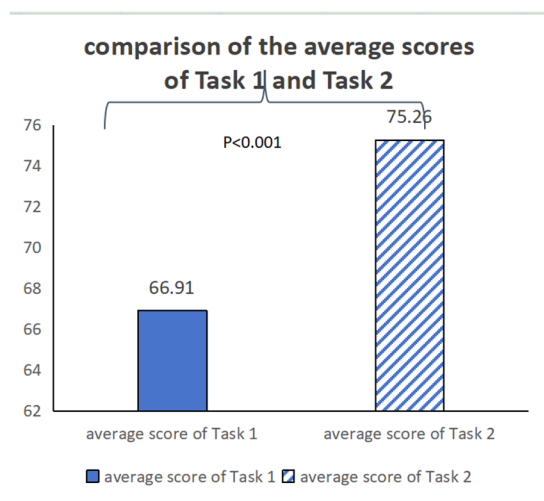


Fig. 1. comparison of the average scores of Task 1 and task 2

5.2 Discussion of Results

The task-driven chunk teaching model discussed in this article has played a certain role in enhancing students' awareness of prefabricated chunks in spoken English and promoting their ability to use chunks. The effectiveness of this model can be clearly seen from the comparison of the three output tasks. This is closely related to the precise application of POA. The output-driven hypothesis of POA perfectly aligns with the output teaching objectives of chunks, breaking away from the traditional "input first, output later" teaching sequence. Using various types of language chunks as teaching units, this model achieves a continuous cycle of "chunk motivating -- chunk enabling -- chunk assessing". As a large proportion of natural language chunks, the improvement of chunk output ability in spoken language means the improvement of oral communication ability.

The teaching process under the task-driven chunk teaching model emphasizes that students can recognize the important role of chunks in language learning, consciously

pay attention to identifying chunks during the learning process, and produce language output based on various types of chunks. At the beginning of teaching, students may have weak awareness of chunks, and teachers need to set up various enabling exercises with different difficulty levels. But after forming chunk awareness, students can gradually adapt to the task-driven chunk teaching procedures, and then the teacher intervention can gradually decrease while student initiative gradually increases.

6 Conclusion

This article explores the task-driven chunk teaching model from the perspective of POA and attempts to construct it at a macro level. It elaborates on the three teaching cycles of "chunk motivating -- chunk enabling -- chunk assessing" and conducts a case analysis on "chunk enabling". Finally, through data analysis, the effectiveness of this model can be seen. This study appropriately combines POA with the chunk teaching method, providing new teaching ideas for vocational spoken English teaching. Through the practice of this model, it helps students form a sense of language chunks and develop the habit of oral expression in sentences and even texts based on prefabricated chunks.

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