

Study on College English Teaching Based on the Practice of Production-oriented Approach

Serving the Institute's Object of Cultivating Application-oriented Talents*

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Abstract—This practice is based on the real college English teaching reform carried out in Jiangxi Institute of Fashion Technology. It adopted Production-Oriented Approach (POA), an innovative theory put forward by Wen Qiufang. Aiming to find out how to integrate POA and the institute's objects of cultivating Application-oriented talents with both excellent professional knowledge, skills and comprehensive English abilities, the research applied POA theory to college English teaching. This paper presents both the design and basic teaching process of the teaching practice implemented in the advanced-level class.

Keywords—production-oriented approach; college English teaching; application-oriented talents

I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese society increasingly raises demands for English communicative competence of college students because that China's economy develops rapidly, foreign trade and communication expands continuously, China has proposed the Belt and Road Initiative and adopted its first scale for English proficiency levels in 2018. Meanwhile, college English teaching objectives are gradually improved for the comprehensive development of students' abilities of English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation in order to be adapt to the requirements of cultivating practical talents with excellent professional knowledge, skills and comprehensive English abilities. These abilities are not only mutually restricted and promoted but also serve as a necessity for college students to obtain employment or to sustain their studies.

II. PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

Stern appraised that in 1970s there emerged a "method fever" in foreign language teaching, and various methods emerged one after another.[1] In 1990s, many well-known scholars held that Foreign Language teaching came into post-method era, for example, Kumaravadivelu believe "The death of the Method" [2]. However, under the background of

post-method era, Chinese scholar Qiufang Wen founded the "Production-oriented Approach" (POA for short)[3,4]. Based on the principles of "learning-centered teaching", "learning-using integration" and "whole-person education", with the "output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis" as the core and teachers as the medium, POA is a new theory on college foreign language teaching mainly aiming to intermediate and advanced students in China, and it aims at the close integration and effective interaction of input activities and productive activities, which should be involved in a classroom instruction of high-quality learning. It changes the time-consuming and inefficient traditional teaching patterns into a kind of time-saving and efficient, and changes the "teaching-centered but practice-neglected" and "linguistic-knowledge-based but communicative-ability-ignored" college English classes into "learning-centered and application-oriented" and "communicative-ability-based and linguistic-knowledge-equally-embodied" ones.

Nearly thirteen years of development see that POA has become a sound, practical, effective theoretical system and drawn much attention of scholars and teachers both in domestic and abroad. Continually, many researchers began to explore the application of the theory in teaching, most of which were only based on the original papers. As we can derive from CNKI website, till July 31, 2018, there were 118 papers discussing the latest theories and the teaching practice and application of POA, the related research has mainly focused on the cultivation of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Less attention is paid to combine the POA with the object of cultivating application-oriented talents. To integrate this innovative teaching theory into the practice of college English teaching, how to serve the institute's objects of cultivating application-oriented talents with excellent professional knowledge, skills and comprehensive English abilities. Based on these issues, the research sets applying POA theory to college English classroom instruction to serve the institute's specific object of cultivating application-oriented talents with both excellent professional knowledge, skills and comprehensive English abilities. Based on the teaching practice, this paper shows both the design and basic teaching process of the teaching practice implemented in the advanced-level class.

*Fund: This paper is one of the research results of Jiangxi Institute of Fashion Technology's teaching-reform project "The Practice and Exploration of Production-oriented Approach in College English Teaching-Serve the Institute's Object of Cultivating Application-oriented Talents" ((No.: JF-LX-201602))

The predecessors of POA are the “output-driven hypothesis” [5] and the “output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis” [6]. POA, a “local” theory of foreign language teaching, has employed the achievement of SLA theories, it is on the basis of “output hypothesis” [7] and social and cultural perspective of language learning [8]. As we said before, POA is a new theory on college foreign language teaching mainly aiming to intermediate and advanced students in China, the paper puts forward the new “learning-using integrated”, “output-driven” and “input-enabled” teaching idea to improve the efficiency of the advanced-level English classroom instruction aiming at the advanced-level class, about 200 students, in our institute. POA contains three core phases [9] [10]: First, motivating. In this phase teachers should design appropriate communication scenarios and tasks with potential communicative value, attempting to stimulate students’ initiative for the task and enhance their learning motivation; Second, enabling, in which teachers provide the necessary and comprehensible input materials to guide students to select and process listening and reading materials, get access to the task-required information of language, content, text structure, etc., in order to enable the accomplishment of production; Last, assessing. Teachers make immediate assessment and remedial teaching after students complete the basic productive task. The three phases would be the basis of the research’s teaching design and practice, trying to change the phenomenon of “learning-using separation” into “learning-using integration”.

III. POA-BASED TEACHING PRACTICE — SERVE THE INSTITUTE’S OBJECT OF CULTIVATING APPLICATION-ORIENTED TALENTS

Before combining POA and the institute’s objects of cultivating Application-oriented talents into an integral whole to carry out the institute’s English teaching practice, firstly, we should bear some guidance in mind.

A. Guidance

1) *Define teaching objective*: College English teaching in application-oriented undergraduate should aim for the education of high-level, high-quality application-oriented English talents, who not only have solid basic knowledge of English, outstanding English-output abilities of spoken, written and translation, but also can make cross-cultural communication, have a broad range of knowledge, a strong ability to think and debate, and a strong ability to innovate. Moreover, those talents can consistently keep the goal of the whole learning process.

2) *Change teaching concept*: The key of fostering advanced, practical, compound and high-quality English talents in colleges and universities lies in: fostering students’ excellent study motive, communicative ability of English culture, knowledge structure needed by and suitable to the society and creative spirit. Application-oriented College English teaching should embody its due characteristics and vitality. Production-oriented approach provides a new way of thinking for the training of

application-oriented undergraduate talents in China. It can penetrate language input and output, produce the motivation and target of English learning with the output of language, transform the language input into the productive means of output, and stimulate the students’ inertia knowledge and promote the students’ language through the teaching practice. The development of speech production skills enhances students’ comprehensive ability to use English.

3) *Optimize curriculum*: According to the “production-oriented approach” theory, based on the workplace English capacity requirements analysis, application-oriented undergraduate college English curriculum system should be divided into reading comprehension skills courses, basic presentation skills courses, professional presentation skills courses, translation skills courses, Humanistic quality selective courses (cross-cultural communication, English and American literature appreciation, English country profiles), etc. According to students’ actual situation, the curriculum has different emphasis in the four semesters from the first year of college to the second year of college. Through special training, students’ language production skills, comprehensive application ability and cultural literacy are comprehensively cultivated. The curriculum should focus on the combination of language input and output skills, such as the combination of “listening and speaking”, “writing and reading”, “listening and translating”, and the application of comprehensive skills.

4) *Select teaching content carefully*: The English course of application-oriented undergraduate college needs to train the students’ language skills from a practical point of view. The teaching content should be close to the real life. The learning needs analysis can be carried out in view of the specific situations in life and work. The language output project is designed to be specific and operable. Teachers need to provide appropriate and comprehensible language input to students. Students get information through reading, listening, communication, etc., and then report the project results in the form of written expression and oral expression. In the process of completing the task, many aspects of language skills are trained, especially the training of enhancing the output skills. In addition, College English courses need to pay attention to educating people. Through communication, teachers should help students to analyze and solve problems, pay attention to their emotional changes and mental growth, promote the development of students’ personality and improve their quality, and help students to realize their self-value.

5) *Refine the “student-centered” teaching model*: The teaching aims of cultivating students’ language ability and creativity, improving students’ comprehensive quality demand to implement student-centered classroom teaching.

- Adhere to the principle of “students as the main body, teachers as the dominant”

Break the traditional teaching mode of “teacher explains and student accepts”, give full play to students’ subjectivity

and initiative. Teachers creatively carry out teaching activities, adopt collaborative, interactive and exploratory teaching mode, train students' ability of ability of cooperation, expression, communication, thinking, debating and so on, and improve their working ability needed by the vocational field.

- Carry out individualized teaching

Teachers should respect students' individual learning needs, allow them to independently choose courses and assessment methods, and realize real-time communication between teachers and students by answering questions and giving individual guidance through multiple channels.

- Cultivate self-learning ability

Teachers can make use of modern information technology, such as Internet, intelligent terminal and other modern information technology to create mobile network autonomous learning platform, to provide students with rich and diverse teaching resources, so that students can gain more opportunities for language output, and then develop learning independence and autonomy.

6) *Establish a scientific evaluation system:* At present, application-oriented undergraduate students are still evaluated by CET-4/6, but CET-4/6 mainly focuses on language knowledge rather than language skills. If the teaching goal and content of college English courses are mainly to cultivate language output skills, then it is necessary to build an evaluation system and means centering on output ability. First of all, the assessment content should be diversified. Besides language skills, students' learning ability and thinking level should also be evaluated. Secondly, the assessment subjects are diversified, including teachers, classmates and students themselves. Only by establishing the procedural and dynamic evaluation system can the potential of students be explored and the students be encouraged to keep learning. The organic combination of CET-4/CET-6 and language output skills assessment can improve students' comprehensive quality and promote their abilities' all-round development.

7) *Pay attention to follow up teaching:* The completion of output tasks is not the end of English learning. The improvement of various skills and abilities opens the door to new knowledge and new fields for students. Application-oriented undergraduate colleges and universities should set up diversified English compulsory courses and elective courses according to students' interests and professional conditions, or establish mobile network classes, guide students to acquire more extensive professional knowledge through multiple media, broaden their horizons, cultivate the awareness of lifelong learning, and foster a habit of continuous learning, and better adapt to the needs of social and personal development.

B. Teaching Practice

The research designed and applied the teaching practice in the advanced-level class for one semester with gradual

modification and improvement. This paper only shows the design and teaching of one unit, which lasted two weeks with 1.5 hours per week. The teaching practice meant for four advanced-level classes of non-English majors, sophomore, with 50 students each class in size on average.

1) *Teaching Theme:* The research designed the theme of "Success" based on the second unit Success Is a Choice of 21st Century Practical English volume III.

2) *Task Design:* The task was achieved through three steps in form of oral presentation, situational communication and productive writing. First of all, students were asked to search for the deeds, achievements or defaults, errors of a specific successful/failure company/entrepreneur. Each group selected 2 or 3 deeds, achievements or defaults, errors to discuss in class about the reasons and evidences, repeating, familiarizing themselves with and using the important and difficult key words and expressions used in the text, and generated their own oral report. Then the teacher assigned situational communication, requiring the students a communicative scenario in which students would show his/her partners' view, and they were required to select the reasonable points in each other's statements and then expound and prove his/her personal view. Finally, the teacher assigned a task of writing, for students to finish the productive essay.

3) *Teaching Procedures:* Teaching with the POA consists of the following three phases: motivating, enabling, and assessing.

Motivating: The general and basic aspects of POA motivating are: teachers presenting communication scenarios, students trying to produce, and teachers explaining teaching objectives and productive tasks. So designing a task with potential communicative value and stimulating students' initiative is the starting point. For this unit, the research designed two scenarios. ① Discussion in College Forum: Write a 2-minute speech draft in 100 words on the topic "Success/Failure of a company/an entrepreneur/a great man...". ② Interview in Campus Recruitment: "Could you please analyze the reasons for the success or failure of * * company/* * entrepreneur...". Provide your statements with reasons and evidence in 120 words. Even though most students have not experienced these communicative scenarios, they can truly feel the possibility of its existence and the challenges of these scenarios to their cognition. Finally, the teacher assigned the productive task, requiring students to finish a production, an essay.

Enabling: In this phase, the teacher should give full play to his/her mediating role of guiding students to select the appropriate and comprehensible input materials based on the productive task and enabling the completion of the task, which consist of content, language and structure of the productive essays. Firstly, before class the teacher required students to search for the deeds and achievements of successful companies, entrepreneurs or great men, aiming to promote students' interest and passion through the deeds and achievements that exist in history. In order to provide students with appropriate, comprehensible input materials,

the teacher prepared a listening tape about success and failure beforehand to let the students get access to the task-required information of language, content, text structure. The teacher also provided some reading materials related to the text such as academic theses and essays about success and failure, and then handed out to students for them to make selective learning under instruction of the teacher. In class students were guided to discuss on the materials they have collected, and the reading text in this unit, analyzing, classifying and inducing the reasons and evidences. Through this process, the teacher instructed the students to analyze and generalize the language features of the reading text, which were the task-required information of language, content, text structure, etc., contributing to enabling the accomplishment of production. Then, the teacher designed a communicative scenario in which students would show his/her partners' view, and they were required to select the reasonable points in each other's statements and then expound and prove his/her personal view and then finish the productive essays. In order to seek from the materials for necessary information, students were guided to integrate what has been accumulated through the preview and previous discussion, select the expressions needed, and design his/her own statements, in which the language points and expressions in the text got involved and discuss with his/her partners. After the two phases, the teacher finally require students to accomplish their productive essays by giving examples, summing up structures and imitation.

Assessing: this phase meant to help the teacher recognize and appraise the teaching effect through assessing students' products by the method of teacher-student collaborative assessing. Also it can help the students see their achievements of learning and then further improve the quality of their productive activities. Therefore, the phase of assessing serves as a means of promoting and facilitating students' learning. In this phase, each group of students actively participated in and completed the discussion, communicative scenarios and productive essays steps in class, and uploaded to the online forum their productive essays to share with other groups. Further discussions under the instruction of assessing standard in groups were arranged by the teacher, and he/she designated one to assess the product of another group, find out the highlights and shortcomings of their productive essays and make recommendations for revision. Then teacher re-evaluated the production based on students' statements. When making the summing-up assessment, the teacher affirmed the students' efforts made inside and outside the classroom, and pointed out some common grammatical errors (such as the misuse of participles, part of speech, clauses, etc.) and the defaults in structure and content, with correction and remedial teaching. Finally, the students were required to revise their productive essays and submit to the teacher.

IV. CONCLUSION

The research group has made a preliminary attempt in class to try this theory and develop students' competence of applying English through more focus on their expressing and writing abilities, which can confirm the feasibility of its

implementation. However, the teaching design still has many aspects to improve, such as how to make the design and textbook more closely related, how to design teaching content which is closer to the real life, how to accurately control the level of task difficulties, and how to keep their follow-up learning. This paper only involves teaching practice of one unit and finished the basic trying of POA based English teaching in our institute. All in all, the "production-oriented approach", which takes language input as a means and takes output ability as a goal, has brought a brand-new reform idea to college English teaching in application-oriented colleges and universities. Under its guidance, a new college English teaching system is established based on the principle of practical sufficiency, which highlights the dominant position of language output and pays more attention to the cultivation and improvement of students' language application ability and comprehensive quality. Of course, we need to carry out further teaching action research, and improve the English output ability training model of application-oriented undergraduate colleges and universities in the real teaching practice in our institute.

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