

# Implementing Production-oriented Approach in College English Teaching

## A Case in Wuhan Donghu University

Wang Jiang

Department of Foreign Language  
Wuhan Donghu University  
Wuhan, China 430212

**Abstract**—"Production-oriented approach" is a foreign language teaching theory created by Professor Wen Qiufang to improve the effectiveness of College English teaching in China. The author tries to apply this teaching theory to practice and carries out a teaching experiment for two weeks. This paper presents the teaching design and process based on this theory, and also reports the feedback of teaching by students, teachers through questions and interviews. The author also reflects the teaching based on classroom observation. At the end of this paper, the author points out some deficiency in the practical application of production-oriented approach in foreign language classroom and tries to find the solutions.

**Keywords**—*production-oriented approach; output-driven; College English*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the requirement for students' English proficiency is increasing and students cannot follow their demand for their future career, so the voice of College English teaching reform has been increasing. In addition to affirming the merits of College English teaching as a national strategy in talent market, there are many criticisms for the shortcoming of College English classroom teaching nowadays, for example, it is time-consuming and inefficient. Some scholars think that college English teachers in China generally stress on teaching rather than practicing and stress on language knowledge while neglect language communicative competence. In order to improve the effect of College English teaching, in recent years, while learning and introducing foreign teaching methods (such as task-based teaching method and project-based teaching method), domestic scholars are also constantly exploring the "localized" foreign language teaching theory and methods suitable for China's national conditions.

"Production-oriented approach" is a brand-new theory of foreign language classroom teaching put forward by Professor Wen Qiufang which can be implemented in Chinese universities. After nearly eight years' development, a perfect theoretical system has been formed. With the publication of Professor Wen Qiufang's series of papers and repeated teaching seminars at home and abroad, this teaching

method has attracted great attention from foreign language experts and teachers, and some teachers have begun to try to use it in the classroom. However, it is not yet known how the teaching results are achieved. How to integrate this innovative teaching theory into college English teaching practice, what problems or contradictions will arise in the process of teaching practice, and what feedback and evaluation will be provided by students and teachers, all of which need to be tested by practice. Based on these problems, the author tries to apply the "production-oriented approach" to college English classroom. After several iterations of teaching experiments, the author explores some elementary principles of teaching design. Based on the author's teaching attempt, this paper shows a curriculum design of a unit and basic teaching process, and reports the feedback of students and colleagues on this teaching theory, as well as the reflection for practice.

### II. PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

"Production-oriented approach" is a teaching theory proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang for advanced foreign language learners in China. Its predecessors are output-driven hypothesis and output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis. As a "localized" foreign language teaching theory, the output-oriented approach draws on the achievements of second language acquisition theory. Based on the output hypothesis and the socio-cultural perspective of language learning, it advocates the teaching concept of "integration of learning and application", and employs output activities as a driving tool and teaching objectives, and input activities as input-enabled. As far as the teaching objective is concerned, it not only takes output as the starting point, drives students' enthusiasm for learning, but also takes output as the goal, so as to make full use of what they learn. As far as the teaching method is concerned, it emphasizes the role of output activities in language learning, and links output with input, thus putting forward new teaching ideas for improving the efficiency of College English classroom teaching.

Production-oriented approach has three core links: one is "motivating". Teachers design appropriate communication scenarios and tasks with potential communicative value to

stimulate students' enthusiasm to complete tasks and enhance their motivation for learning. The second is "enabling". Teachers provide necessary input materials to guide students to acquire the information of language, content and textual structure of listening and reading materials needed to complete the task through the selection and processing, so as to facilitate the completion of output tasks. The third is the "assessing", that is, students complete basic output tasks or similar new tasks, while teachers make immediate evaluation and remedial teaching. These three core links are the basis of the author's teaching design and practice.

### III. CLASSROOM PRACTICE OF OUTPUT-ORIENTED APPROACH

#### A. Teaching Theme

The author designed a teaching plan of a unit, after repeated revision and improvement, put it into teaching practice, carried out a two-week teaching experiment, two class hours a week. The object of teaching is second-year students majoring in logistics. There are 26 students in the class. The author videotapes the whole teaching process and invites colleagues to observe it after the class. After the teaching experiment, the feedbacks of this teaching theory were collected by students, and the author as a practical teacher through questions, interviews and reflection.

The author chooses Unit 8 *Culture Shock* in *New Century College English Zooming In: An Integrated English Course* as a theme to assign a task to the students. Thus, the students firstly watch a video describing culture shock and then read through text A to understand such questions as what is culture shock? How and why does it happen? What is the nature of culture shock? And how can we cope with it? Finally, the students should make a PowerPoint to report their findings after the class.

#### B. Teaching Objectives

The teaching objectives are divided into two parts: language and culture. The aim of culture is to cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence. For instance, students should have intercultural awareness and the ability to identify cultural differences. What's more, students are able to analyze and explain the reasons behind cultural shock. Lastly, when students encounter some difficulties in communication, they are able to defend their own culture and finally solve the problems. In text A, language objectives include: 1) 17 key words and 39 phrase expressions, 6 sentence structures; 2) double negation, subjunctive mood and subordinators; 3) using rhetorical repetition and comparison in their presentation. Teachers require students try to use these language points in their presentation to deepen their impression in language learning.

#### C. Task Design

The task firstly was presented by watching a video and after watching it, students should firstly discussed the differences in culture of foreign countries and our countries, then students can act it out in the class. After that, reading

text A will make them understand the structure of the text and also make a PowerPoint according to the structure of the text.

So their task should be included three parts: 1) What is culture shock? To define the terms, students should both employ the definition on the book and give the definition in accordance with their own understanding. 2) What caused culture shock? Students should find some pictures to analyze the reason and know some differences in culture resulting culture shock. 3) How to overcome culture shock? As in the report, students should also give us the measures to solve this problem in the real world. So the students will be divided in 7 groups with 3 to 4 person per group. They should accomplish the PowerPoint after the first period of time.

As far as language use is concerned, this task involves the introduction of cultural points, the rewriting of the text and accumulation of information after the class. In terms of cognition and communication, the task involves awareness of cultural differences, intercultural communication knowledge and strategies, and the task is complex. Therefore, when designing the teaching process, teachers divide this task into three levels of sub-tasks to help students gradually achieve three goals: First is identification. It can identify the cultural differences in the video, recognize the differences of thinking habits, values and beliefs under the image of cultural shock, and analyze the subjective and objective reasons leading to cultural shock. Second is explanation. When conflicts occur, appropriate communication strategies can be used to introduce or explain local culture. The third is the way to solve the problem. Through reporting in the class, they introduce the results of findings of culture shock.

#### D. Teaching Process

Classroom teaching process follows three basic processes of output-oriented approach: motivating, enabling, and accessing.

1) *Motivating*: Designing tasks with potential communicative value and stimulating students' enthusiasm for learning are the starting points of the production-oriented approach. Before assigning the task of report, teachers take the concept of culture and culture shock as the starting point to guide students to imagine the possibility of intercultural communication in their future life and study, and the possibility and encountering culture shock in their future career. Then, through several videos, ranging from movies named *Scrapping* to the video clip happened in Weibo named *Dolce & Gabbana event humiliating China*.

Then, teachers challenge students with three questions: 1) From these data, can you conclude with your own words, what is culture shock? 2) If you encountered a culture shock in foreign countries, can you defend your culture? 3) How can you solve the problems?

After thinking about these questions, students will be required to read through text A in unit 8, find the answers in the text and comprehend the meaning. Then the teacher asked three students to answer the questions, so they can

make a preliminary attempt at the task, and stimulate the enthusiasm of learning.

Finally, the teacher assigns the output task of the unit, that is, with the help of the plot of the video and the content of the text, every group should make a PowerPoint through accumulation of information. The reason we use the plot in the video, because the film as audio-visual materials, text as written materials, can provide rich language materials for teaching for one hand, and for the other hand, for students to learn.

2) *Enabling*: In enabling, teachers should give full play to the intermediary role to guide students to select appropriate input materials for selective learning around the output task, and promote the completion of the task. As mentioned above, after predicting the difficulty and complexity of the task, the teacher divides the presentation task into three sub-tasks. This part aims at these three sub-tasks and completes it step by step:

Sub-task 1: Identify the concept of cultural shock. This sub-task serves as the starting point of input. By watching videos and reading the text in Unit 8, students should have a clear understanding of such concept as: what is culture? What is culture shock?

Through inputting activities and discussion, students' awareness of cross-cultural communication can be aroused. Teachers ask students to preview the text and search information. In the class, teachers ask students to show the definition or to say, the understanding of culture and culture shock orally so as to prepare for the completion of the tasks.

Sub-task 2: Identify the differences in the different culture. Firstly, students should find some facts of local culture and foreign culture, such as in aspects of food, eating habits, ways of communication and etc. From those facts, students can compare the different value orientations of China and foreign countries.

By identifying the differences in different culture and discussion, students' awareness of cross-cultural communication can be aroused. Teachers ask students to watch videos and preview the text before the class. In the class, teachers ask students a few questions to guide students to discuss the underlying causes of the culture shock.

Sub-Task 3: The way to solve the problem — how to overcome the culture shock? And defend our local culture. Through the completion of the above two sub-tasks, students have been able to use appropriate language and necessary communication strategies to introduce the two local cultural points. The next task is to apply this knowledge to the completion of the task. In their report, they should not only put forward ways to solve the problems, that is, how to overcome the culture shock, but also propose a way to defend the local culture.

3) *Assessing*: The evaluation of production-oriented method aims to help teachers understand the teaching effect through the evaluation of students' works, and at the same time to help students understand the learning results to

further improve the quality of their output. Therefore, the evaluation has the function of promoting learning.

In this part, students search and accumulate information before the class and report their finding through PowerPoint in class. Each group lasts about 4-5 minutes. Each listener has a rating table, and the students are graded according to the evaluation criteria previously agreed by the teachers and students. Generally speaking, the students' presentation is quite successful. Apart from some of the mistakes in grammar and not-so-influenced expression, most of the groups complete the task smoothly. In the presentation, the students are open-minded. They not only use the words and phrases to achieve language goals appropriately, but also creatively use appropriate communicating skills (such as example, quotation, etc.) and also use some videos to make their presentation convincing.

After the first group is finished, the teacher will comment on the content of the presentation and their performance on the platform. The group representatives give out the advantages and disadvantages of each group according to the group members' opinions. At the same time, they give suggestions for improvement, and the teachers re-evaluate according to the students' opinions. At the same time, he corrected and remedied some common errors in pronunciation, grammar and pragmatics.

#### IV. TEACHING FEEDBACK

After the teaching experiment, the author understands the students' learning experience and feedback of teaching through some questions. The question covers some dimensions, such as, learning harvest of the unit, difficulties in learning process, feedback of teaching methods and suggestions to teachers. A total of 25 valid questions and 5 suggestions were collected. The results of the questions show that the vast majority of students (85%) say that they have achieved a lot, which is mainly reflected in language, cultural awareness and communication skills. This kind of course is very useful for both learning English and practicing intercultural communication skills. It learns a lot of words and sentences as well as communicative skills. However, finishing the task poses a great challenge to students' time investment and teamwork. What's more, some of students feel it difficult to speak English fluently with right pronunciation and intonation, especially for some specialized vocabulary. More than two-thirds of those students show their affirmation and their love for the teaching mode although they should spend more time on the task.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The production-oriented approach can stimulate students' positive emotional experience. On the one hand, the task with driving force mobilizes students' learning enthusiasm. By using real intercultural communication cases, students can create real communication situations and make them feel that what they have learnt is very useful through the task with communicative value, which drives their interest in learning. On the other hand, the task assigned by the teacher also allows students to get a sense of accomplishment in the

process of completing tasks. By introducing the teaching concept of combining learning-using as one and adopting a brand-new form of teaching method, the production-oriented approach has innovated the College English teaching and is beneficial for improvement of students' proficiency in English. The author has made a preliminary attempt to this method in the classroom, which preliminarily proves the feasibility of this method. However, due to various subjective and objective reasons, including the short time of the experiment, the author's teaching design is not mature enough, and many details of classroom teaching need to be improved, such as whether students with different majors will present different results has not been proved yet. In the future, more classroom attempts can be awaited to enrich and improve the classroom design of production-oriented approach and College English teaching can also be improved by these fruitful results. Students in school can be best equipped with practical skills in communication and grow to be applied personnel who master English as well as their majors.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Arnold, J. 1999. *Affect in Language Learning*[M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [2] Brown, H. 2002. *Principle of Language Learning and Teaching*[M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [3] Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education. 2007. *College English Teaching Requirements* [Z]. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- [4] Lantolf, J. 2000. *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Acquisition*[M]. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Nunan, D. 2011. *Task-based Language Teaching*[M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Qin Xiubai, Zhang Fengchun. 2014. *New Century College English Zooming in: An Integrated English Course* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [7] Richards, J & T. Rodgers. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*[M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Swain, M. 1985. Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development[A]. In S. Gass & C. Madden ( eds.). *Input in Second Language Acquisition* [C]. Rowley: Newbury House.
- [9] Wang Chuming. 2014. Content to be Created, Language to be Imitated - Basic Ideas for Effective Foreign Language Teaching and Learning [J]. *Foreign Language Circles*, (2): 42-48.
- [10] Wen Qiufang. 2008. Output-driven Hypothesis and English Professional Skills Curriculum Reform [J]. *Foreign Languages*, (2): 2-9.
- [11] Wen Qiufang. 2013. The Application of Output-Driven Hypothesis in College English Teaching: Thoughts and Suggestions [J]. *Foreign Language Circles*, (6): 14-22.
- [12] Wen Qiufang. 2014. Output Driven — Input Promoting Hypothesis - An Attempt to Construct the Theory of College Foreign Language Classroom Teaching [J]. *Foreign Language Education in China*, (2): 3-12.
- [13] Wen Qiufang. 2015. Constructing the Theoretical System of Production-oriented Approach [J]. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, (4): 387-398.
- [14] Xia Jimei. 2002. Report on the Survey of College English Teachers' Foreign Language Education Concepts, Knowledge, Abilities, Research Status and Further Studies [J]. *Foreign Language Circles*, (5): 35-41.