

Teaching Design of Advanced English Course Based on Production-oriented Approach

-- Taking Unit 1 of *Contemporary College English VI* as an Example

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Abstract

Based on the teaching philosophy of production-oriented approach, this paper takes Unit 1 of *Contemporary College English VI* (Second Edition) as an example to explain in detail how the author implements the internal small cycle and the overall big cycle of "motivating-enabling-assessing" in the teaching procedure, highlights the teacher's leading role and exerts the scaffolding function so as to increase students' participation and challenge, and improve their sense of achievement and success to the course.

Keywords

Production-oriented approach (POA); Advanced English course; Teaching design; Motivating-enabling-assessing.

1. Introduction

Production-oriented Approach (POA) was proposed to solve two shortcomings of foreign language teaching in China: "Separation of learning and use" and "Separation of text and language". The development of POA has gone through the initial "germination stage, the embryonic stage, and then the formative stage (POA 1.0), the revision stage (POA 2.0), and the current revision stage (POA 3.0) (Wen, 2021: 37). Through international forums, academic seminars, and paper publications, this pedagogical theory has had a large impact on the domestic and international academic community. Some foreign scholars have reflected on and looked forward to the production-oriented approach (Ellis 2017; Matsuda 2017; Polio 2017). In China, in the past five years, the overall researches related to production-oriented approach have been on the rise. As shown through the literature study on CNKI, there are quite a lot of studies related to production-oriented approach, while Wen Qiufang's POA research team mainly established the target courses of the study on general courses in college English, and relatively few studies on other types of courses. Although the target audience of POA theory is college students with intermediate foreign language proficiency, there are few studies applying the theory to English major courses.

Based on the above, Wen Qiufang (2021:205) proposes that the application scope of POA can be expanded in two aspects: the teaching objective and the type of course. Therefore, this paper focuses on the junior students of English majors, applying the production-oriented approach to the advanced English professional skills course. There are three research questions as follows:

1. What are the current teaching problems of advanced English course for English major students?
2. How can the teaching philosophy of production-oriented approach guide teachers' teaching?
3. How can the production-oriented teaching procedure "motivating-enabling-assessing" be effectively applied to the teaching design of the advanced English course?

This paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, the author introduces the theoretical system of production-oriented approach. Secondly, the paper introduces the current teaching problems

in teaching Advanced English course. Finally, through case study, the study takes Unit 1 of Contemporary College English VI as the entry point to design and implement the "motivating-enabling-assessing" teaching procedure under the guidance of POA to develop an operative classroom teaching design.

2. Theoretical System of Production-oriented Approach

The production-oriented approach is a theoretical system of teaching and learning in college foreign language classrooms built by the foreign language education research team led by Wen Qiufang after more than ten years of polishing (Wen 2015, 2018, 2021). The system consists of three parts: teaching philosophy, teaching hypothesis and teaching procedure. Compared with the POA theory system version 1.0 and 2.0 proposed by Wen Qiufang (2015, 2017), the theoretical system of POA version 3.0 (See Figure 1) has all been improved in the above three aspects(Wen, 2018). In terms of teaching philosophy, the original "Whole-person education theory" is refined into "Key competency", which makes it more teachable and measurable. At the same time, the "Culture communication" is added to the cultivating objective, "Learning by assessing" is added to the teaching hypothesis, and the teaching procedure is divided into three "motivating-enabling-assessing" cycles. The teaching procedure has polished the three stages: from motivating-enabling-assessing, the "internal small-cycle", to the "overall big-cycle", and the role of teachers and students has been more clearly defined in the teaching procedure, replacing "teacher-mediated" with "teacher's leading and teacher-student co-construction", further highlighting the important role of teachers (Wen, 2021: 41).

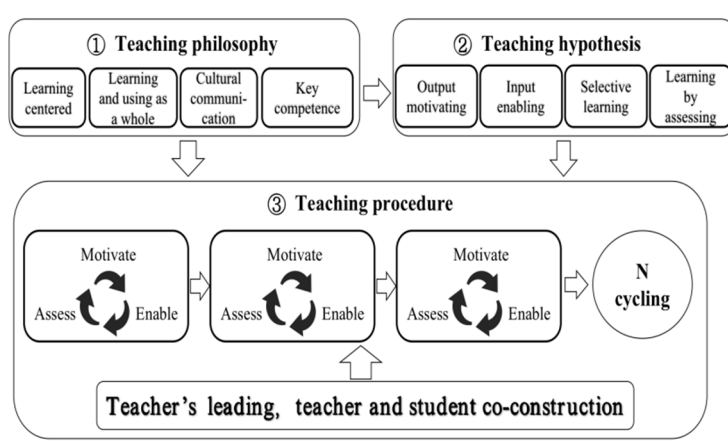


Figure 1. POA Theoretical System Version 3.0 (Wen, 2018: 393)

3. Problems in Teaching Advanced English Course

Advanced English course, as an intensive reading course and English core course, has an important role in the curriculum of English majors in the senior level. However, after students completing the basic courses in the first two years, the learning effect of the intensive reading courses in the third year is not satisfactory. Three main problems exist in the teaching procedure.

3.1. Unclear Teaching Objectives and Scattered Practice to Skills

In the interview to the teachers, majority of them said that they often felt pressured and overwhelmed by the lack of balance in the improvement in knowledge, competence, and quality objectives mentioned in the course objectives. And this anxiety was passed on to students to some extent. As to the interview to students at the end of the semester, some of them mentioned

that although intensive reading classes were important and many of those spent a lot of time studying, they did not have a high sense of achievement and contentment.

3.2. Marginalized Role and Unapparent Function of Scaffolding of Teachers

In recent years, due to the influence of western educational theories, especially the promotion of the "student-centered" educational philosophy, it has led teachers to play a more active role as facilitators, advisors and helpers. Some teachers organize various kinds of activities in the classroom, such as discussions, role plays, oral communication, etc. Students do have more opportunities to use language knowledge and practice language skills in the classroom, but they mainly use their old knowledge, and there is no way to know whether they can acquire new language knowledge and expand their knowledge and abilities. In this case, the teacher's role is not fully developed, and he or she does not offer effective scaffolding to increase the challenge to students to acquire new knowledge.

3.3. Overemphasis on Learning and Input from Teachers to Students

In the era of abundant paper books and online information, teachers can provide students with a wide variety of language learning resources, such as websites, apps, and corpora for skill enhancement. However, students are dazzled by the variety of inputs available to them. The main reason for this is that teachers do not integrate these inputs with the goals and content they want to achieve. Some teachers share the learning resources with students according to their own preferences, and some of the contents are not even directly related to the curriculum; some teachers just share the resources with students after inputting knowledge to them, without checking or assessing them during or after class. Therefore, the teaching effect is insignificant.

4. Teaching Design Guided by Production-oriented Approach: A Case Study

In this paper, the case study takes Paper Tiger, Unit 1 of Contemporary College English VI (2nd Edition) as an example to illustrate how the author applies the teaching philosophy of POA and adopts the teaching procedure of motivating-enabling-assessing in concrete teaching practice. The teaching arrangement for this unit is altogether eight hours. The objectives are to reveal the living conditions of Asians in American society, to evaluate the author's viewpoint and to enlighten personal reflection on Asian values and education. The students are cultivated to be objective, open and respectful to cultural differences, to learn and examine the values and education views of one's own country, and to build a view of cultural communication and mutual appreciation.

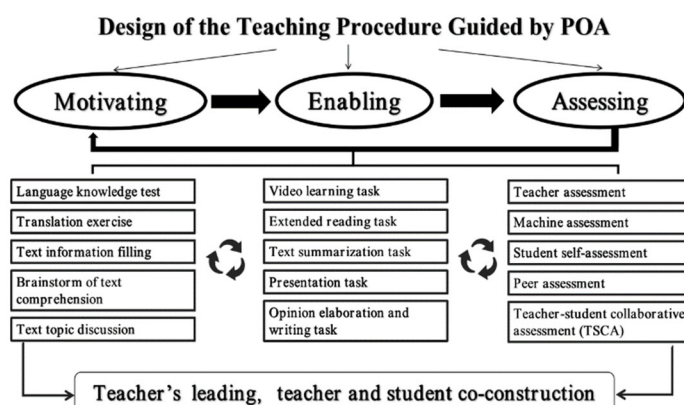


Figure 2. Design of Teaching Procedure, a Case Study of Paper Tiger, Unit 1 of Contemporary College English VI (Second Edition)

4.1. Design of the Motivating Phase (2 Hours)

The "Output-driven hypothesis" (Wen, 2021) mainly emphasizes on allowing learners to try the output and realize their own shortcomings, and then the teacher provides scaffolding to help students effectively absorb, digest and apply the relevant inputs provided subsequently according to the output goals and difficulties that arise, which can promote students' internal drive to learn and stimulate their desire to acquire new knowledge. At the same time, the design of the motivation can be related to the actual needs of the society in terms of employment, so that students can practice their output skills (speaking, writing and translating) and achieve the goal of "learning to use".

In this session, the teacher designed five output motivations (See Figure 2): language knowledge test, translation exercise of introduction text, text information filling, brainstorm of text comprehension and text topic discussion. The above five motivations examined students' vocabulary skills, translation skills, reading skills, writing skills and critical thinking skills from point to point and from superficial to deep. In practice, the results showed that the students' language knowledge was not solid enough, their translation was inaccurate and inappropriate; their understanding of the text was not comprehensive and meticulous; their writing was incomplete in providing sufficient examples, their structure and ideas were unclear; and their exploration of the theme of the text was not deep enough and their critical thinking skills were not strong enough. As shown by the fact that the presentation of ideas was only on superficial issues without in-depth thinking and analysis. The above deficiencies in students' abilities as reflected in the motivating procedure can effectively motivate students to learn and pave the way for the achievement of the later enabling and output goals.

4.2. Design of the Enabling Phase (4 hours)

The enabling phase is "the most critical and challenging" in the three POA teaching procedures (Wen, 2015). Its key and challenging aspects are mainly reflected in the following three aspects: the development of the scaffolding function of teachers, their grasp of the "precision, progressiveness and diversity" of the enabling phase, and whether teachers can choose the content, language and discourse structure for the students from the input enabling according to the needs of the output goals, which reflects the concept of "learning and using as a whole" in the whole enabling procedure. The concept of "learning and using as a whole" is reflected in the whole enabling procedure. In contrast to the "student-centered" teaching concept, POA proposes "learning-centered", which advocates that all activities of classroom teaching should serve effective learning, and teaching must achieve teaching goals and contribute to effective learning (Wen, 2015:549). Emphasis is placed on the leading role of the teacher and the scaffolding function. Therefore, in the classroom, the effectiveness of teaching is not judged by how many students speak up in class, how many activities they participate in, and how active the classroom atmosphere is; rather, it needs to measure the degree of achievement of students' output goals and the sense of accomplishment of the learning content within the limited time of the classroom.

In this session, the teacher designed five input enabling tasks (See Figure 2): a video learning task (news and interviews) , an extended reading task, a text summarization task, a presentation task (on the topic of Asian survival in the United States), and an opinion elaboration and writing task. By watching videos related to the content of the text, reading relevant materials, summarizing the content of the text that reveals the survival of Asians, and listening to other students' opinions on the issue, the enabling purpose is to promote students' in-depth understanding and comprehensive grasp of the text and the author's viewpoint, so as to form a personal review of Asian values and education, and be able to express and write clearly. In each enabling task, the teacher performed scaffolding work, such as providing students with input materials for selective learning (videos, readings, textual content), an

outline of listening materials for the speech in the student presentation to assist students in better understanding the content of the speech, improving their listening skills while refining the essence of the speech content, and continuously focusing on output goals, before expressing their opinions and writing compositions. The teacher also provides students with relevant vocabulary expressions and authentic sentences to enable them to learn new knowledge while activating old knowledge and applying it to achieve output goals of the Unit.

4.3. Design of the Assessing Phase (2 Hours)

Assessing is the last phase in the POA teaching procedure, and it is also an essential part. It can be said that "assessing" is the sublimation stage of teaching, and is an indispensable and important part of the cycle, and only when "assessing" is completed is the learning cycle chain completed (Wen, 2016).

In this session, the teacher set up an assessing phase based on all five enabling tasks, so that the whole output activity formed a complete closed loop and repeated the cycle. In addition to the timely assessment made by the teacher during the teaching procedure along with the student outputs, such as the assessment of the summarization of the text content and the assessment of the students' opinion, POA especially emphasized on the Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA), which can serve as a powerful supplement to the traditional teacher assessment, machine assessment, student self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher-student collaborative assessment. In the assessing design of this Unit, the Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment is mainly reflected in the assessing of students' translation assignments and speeches, based on the assessing criteria announced by the teacher to students before the class (for example, the assessing criteria of translation refers to the grading criteria of translation question in English Professional TEM 8 examination; the assessing scale of speeches was announced by the teacher to students at the beginning of the semester.) In conclusion, having the teacher's professional lead first, students' comment later, and finally the teacher selecting representative questions for guidance and assessing, all can optimize the learning effect and improve teaching efficiency.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this paper demonstrates the design of the teaching procedure guided by the POA theory through a case study, using the first Unit of Contemporary College English VI (2nd edition) as an example. The "motivating-enabling-assessing" chain forms an internal small cycle and an overall big cycle. The output-motivation approach can effectively stimulate students' internal motivation to learn, so that students can have clear gains in each lesson and target the six key competencies based on language proficiency as proposed by POA. In the teaching procedure, the teacher plays a leading role in clarifying the teaching objectives and understanding the materials before designing the classroom instruction. The teacher not only plays a scaffolding role by providing students with materials inside and outside the classroom that are closely related to the teaching objectives, but also, creates opportunities for students to provide support and assistance to each other (peer scaffolding) (Cao, 2017: 21), sets up learning role models while promoting a sense of cooperative learning among students. Overall, POA's pedagogical theory provides "three clarifications" for the design of advanced English courses, i.e. clarification of the teaching objectives, the role of the teacher, and the teaching procedure.

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