

# Research and Practice of Production-oriented Approach in College English Teaching

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**Abstract:** With continuous improvement of current social requirements for talent and comprehensive promotion of quality education, a wave of teaching reform has gradually emerged in higher education. Transformation of teaching models and improvement of teaching methods have become an imperative part of enhancing teaching quality. College English, as a major course with a focus on practical application, whose ultimate teaching effectiveness will be largely determined by the feasibility of teaching methods applied. In the current widespread situation of emphasizing lecturing over practicing in English teaching, exploring feasible and effective teaching methods has become an important educational task for universities. Based on theoretical learning and practical application, this paper analyzes the use of Production-oriented Approach in current college English course.

## 1. Introduction

Production-oriented Approach (POA) is a skills-training teaching method primarily designed for English major courses, but it can also be applied to College English teaching. In terms of its conceptual positioning, POA is based on psycholinguistics and advocates using the knowledge system independently assimilated after learning theoretical knowledge as the main driving force for the development of English application abilities. Compared with traditional integrated English teaching methods, POA is more inclined towards practical application training. Under the traditional integrated English teaching model, in order to meet examination standards, teachers mostly focus on theoretical knowledge delivery, with a relatively insufficient emphasis on practical application training. The introduction of POA concept has effectively filled this gap. Since its application in college English classrooms, the theoretical hypothesis on how to motivate students to actively participate in the “Production” process has been continuously practiced and innovated. By 2015, a complete theoretical system of POA had been formally established by Wen Qiufang, comprising three main components: teaching principles, teaching hypotheses, and teacher-mediated teaching process.

## 2. Theory of Production-oriented Approach

Formation of POA is primarily based on production-driven hypothesis. Over years of innovation and development, it has gradually evolved into “output-driven and input-enabled hypothesis,” which means that completion of output tasks is driven by input of linguistic materials and related theoretical knowledge. Based on this prototype, POA has made corresponding adjustments according to its own positioning and characteristics. On the one hand, POA is mainly targeted at intermediate and advanced English learners, especially college students. On the other hand, in addition to speaking and writing, which are traditionally emphasized in teaching, POA also includes interpreting and translating as part of the output content, focusing on operation of output process and conducting corresponding evaluations of output results. [1] The theoretical system of POA is constructed by three parts: teaching principles, teaching hypotheses and teacher-mediated teaching process. Among them, teaching principles are the guiding ideology of the other two parts; teaching hypotheses are the theoretical support of teaching process; teaching process is the realization of teaching principles and teaching hypotheses, and intermediary role of teachers is reflected in all aspects of teaching process.

## **2.1 Teaching principles of POA**

Teaching principles of POA includes Learning-centered Principle, Learning-using Integrated Principle and Whole-person Education Principle. These three principles form a complete POA theoretical system, which serves as the foundational basis for subsequent teaching activities. Firstly, Learning-centered Principle advocates that teaching must achieve teaching objectives and facilitate effective learning, which concisely and accurately reflects the essence of school education. Classroom activities can take various forms, such as lectures, group discussions, pair work, individual presentations, and group presentations. Different forms serve different teaching objectives, and the key lies in the teacher's selection of the optimal form to achieve the teaching objectives. Secondly, Learning-using Integrated Principle advocates that in classroom teaching, all language teaching activities should be closely connected with practical application. This principle aims to eliminate the boundary between "learning" and "using," and to integrate the two seamlessly. Students no longer merely learn the texts; instead, they use the texts as a means to learn how to complete output tasks in English. Thirdly, Whole-person Education Principle posits that language education is concerned with human beings. Humans are advanced beings with emotions and thoughts.[2] We cannot regard the subjects of education as products on an assembly line or as robots to be manipulated at will. If education is to serve the comprehensive development of individuals, it must take into account various aspects of human beings, including their intelligence, emotions, and morality. Specifically, foreign language courses should not only achieve the instrumental goal of enhancing students' comprehensive English language application abilities but also fulfill the humanistic goals of higher education. These goals include, for example, improving students' critical thinking skills, autonomous learning abilities, and overall cultural literacy.

## **2.2 Teaching hypotheses of POA**

Teaching hypotheses includes Output-Driven Hypothesis, Input-enabled Hypothesis and Selective Learning Hypothesis. Output-Driven Hypothesis holds that Output is both the driving force and the objective of language learning. Output learning is more effective than input-based learning in stimulating students' desire and enthusiasm for learning, and it is more likely to yield better learning outcomes. [3] In other words, in teaching, output tasks are used as the starting point. After students attempt to complete these output tasks, they can, on the one hand, become aware of the communicative value of output tasks in enhancing cultural literacy, completing academic work, and improving future workplace interactions. On the other hand, they can recognize their own deficiencies in language ability, thereby enhancing their sense of urgency in learning. Input-enabled Hypothesis suggests that under output-driven conditions, providing appropriate input that can facilitate production at the right time yields better learning outcomes compared to not providing such input. Selective Learning Hypothesis refers to the process of choosing useful elements from input materials based on the needs of production, and then engaging in in-depth processing, practice, and memorization of these selected elements.

## **2.3 Teaching procedures of POA**

Teaching procedures of POA consist of three stages: 1) Motivating; 2) Enabling; 3) Assessing. All three stages must be mediated by the teacher. The mediating role here is specifically manifested in guiding, designing, and scaffolding, among other functions. Motivating mainly refers to the creation of teaching scenarios or task contexts, which generally falls within the purview of the teacher. Enabling involves using input materials to complete output tasks and is conducted by the learners. Assessing typically refers to the evaluation of the quality of the output products and the provision of suggestions.[4]

### 3. Practice of POA in college English teaching

There is a wide variety of English reading courses, including courses such as *Integrated English*, *Extensive Reading*, and *Advanced English* for English majors, *Basic English* and *Business English Reading* for Business English majors, as well as the general course *College English* for non-English majors. This paper takes *College English* as an example to conduct research on the teaching of English reading courses.

#### 3.1 Course objectives and features

*College English* is a general foundational course that explores the application and charm of English language. Through the instruction of this course, students will study the use and application skills of English language, as well as content related to intercultural communication. They will acquire knowledge of comprehensive English language use, learning methods, and intercultural communication. Additionally, students will learn strategies for vocabulary, grammar, and sentence pattern usage, and develop basic skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. The course aims to cultivate students' English language thinking and self-study habits, enhance their cultural confidence, global vision, and humanistic literacy. It also lays the foundation for their future professional work involving oral and written communication in a foreign language related to their field of study.

The course adopts *iEnglish New Generation College English(Advanced Level Book 1)* as the teaching material. This textbook is developed in accordance with the spirit of the Ministry of Education's guidelines on college English teaching reform and is tailored to the actual needs of college English teaching in higher education institutions across the country. Firstly, course design is practical and motivational. Starting from the actual English teaching in ordinary undergraduate institutions and students' learning interests, the course sets up communicative scenarios that are close to students' lives and reflect practicality. It selects input materials with moderate difficulty and appropriate length and designs a variety of flexible and diverse exercise formats. By using real-life scenarios and innovative designs, the course aims to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning. Secondly, course themes are rich enough to enhance humanistic quality. The themes are diverse, covering topics such as campus life, leisure and entertainment, emotional development, and life planning, as well as aspects of social development, history and culture, governance, economy, and scientific and technological innovation. These themes enhance students' scientific and humanistic literacy and support their personal growth. The selection of materials adheres to the principle of ideological soundness, cultivating students' correct values and developing their critical thinking skills. The cultural perspective is comprehensive, showcasing diverse cultures with an emphasis on Chinese culture. By comparing and analyzing Chinese and foreign cultures, the course helps students strengthen their cultural confidence. Thirdly, course content meets needs and strengthens language foundation. The course design closely aligns with the language development needs of students in ordinary undergraduate institutions. It focuses on basic language knowledge such as vocabulary, collocations, grammar, and discourse, as well as foundational language skills in speaking, reading, writing, and translating. The course also incorporates micro-lecture videos to explain language learning strategies and online interactive exercises to reinforce basic language learning, thereby laying a solid foundation for students' language application abilities.

#### 3.2 Practice of college English reading guided by POA

This paper, guided by POA, takes the lesson *The Essence of Chinese Landscape Painting* from *Unit 5 A Taste of Culture* in the textbook *New Generation College English (Advanced Level Book 1)* as a case study, and conducts research and analysis on the teaching design of college English courses. *The Essence of Chinese Landscape Painting* is an insightful expository essay that begins by highlighting the essence of Chinese landscape painting as an art of expressionism, emphasizing its unique cultural connotations and artistic pursuits. The article then elaborates on the initial motivations and purposes behind Chinese painters' creation of landscape paintings, revealing the cultural motivations and spiritual aspirations underlying this art form. The author references the views of

Northern Song Dynasty painter Guo Xi from his work *Lofty Ambitions in Forests and Streams (Linquan Gaozhi)*, detailing the aesthetic standards, compositional principles, and the unique painting technique known as the “Three Distances Method” in Chinese landscape painting. Through the analysis of these core elements, the article delves deeply into the artistic charm of Chinese landscape painting. Ultimately, the article concludes that the essence of Chinese landscape painting lies in the artist’s profound understanding of nature. Artists must internalize vivid memories of natural landscapes and then express these images on paper through personalized brushwork. This process is not only a form of artistic creation but also a unique way for artists to communicate with nature and express their inner world.

### 3.2.1 Motivating stage

Motivating stage in POA is divided into direct motivating and indirect motivating. In indirect motivating, teachers assign students to study micro-lessons, MOOCs, or teaching videos before class and focus on checking their understanding and mastery of the teaching objectives and pre-class learning content during the class. In direct motivating, teachers first present a communicative context, and students complete the communicative tasks assigned by the teacher in class. Subsequently, the teacher clarifies the specific content of the teaching objectives, language goals, and output tasks. By clearly defining the teaching objectives in class, teachers can help students identify their deficiencies and directions for improvement in both language communication and language knowledge. Output tasks can be completed either in class or after class. Post-class tasks are divided into two types: review-based output tasks and transfer-based output tasks. Teachers select appropriate forms of output tasks based on the unit’s teaching content and the designed communicative activities.

Before explaining the text, the teacher should use indirect motivating to stimulate students’ interest in learning. By assigning pre-class tasks, students are asked to watch the English video introduction about Chinese painting in the “Viewing” section of the textbook and answer the following questions in English related to the painting technique of “leaving white space” in Chinese ink wash painting: 1. What is “white space”? 2. What are the main features of “white space”? 3. What is the significance of the concept of “white space”? The teacher can also assign tasks related to Chinese painting by forming study groups, focusing on the following two questions: 1. Can you use an example from the video clip to explain how the technique of “leaving white space” is used in ink wash painting? 2. Can you name some famous Chinese ink wash painting artists and their works? These tasks assigned in the form of study groups can be presented before class through pre-class presentations. During the process of each group member presenting famous Chinese painters and their works, the teacher can observe the results presented by each study group, such as through the creation of PPTs or short videos, to identify the difficulties students encounter while learning English on their own. This observation helps the teacher prepare for the subsequent enabling stage. The teacher should use direct motivating to inform students that the learning objectives of this unit or class is to understand the essence of Chinese landscape painting by comprehending the text and to introduce an aspect of Chinese culture to an international audience in English. This could include topics such as Peking Opera, calligraphy, martial arts, traditional Chinese medicine, Chinese tea, or Chinese ancient coins.

### 3.2.2 Enabling stage

Throughout college English teaching process, enabling stage holds an important position. Teachers should guide students in their English learning based on the problems created, with a particular emphasis on selective learning in areas of their own weaknesses and learning difficulties. This approach promotes the comprehensive development of students’ English learning abilities. Through enabling in college English education, students can effectively engage in English learning and, to a certain extent, alleviate the tension and sense of estrangement between teachers and students. To help students understand the text more effectively and efficiently and complete productive tasks, teachers should base their instruction on the text itself and assign clear learning tasks or provide productive examples to students from three aspects: ideas, language, and discourse structure. This approach enables students to learn independently and complete productive tasks according to their own ability characteristics.

Firstly, in terms of ideas, teachers should assign students the task of identifying the topic sentence of each paragraph in the text and then summarizing the general meaning of the paragraph. For example, the article *The Essence of Chinese Landscape Painting* consists of seven paragraphs, each with a different main idea. In the first paragraph, the author clearly states the essence of Chinese landscape painting and the source of its creative inspiration. The second paragraph explains the Chinese painters' attitude towards and feelings about nature. The third paragraph quotes the original words of Northern Song Dynasty painter Guo Xi to illustrate the aesthetic standards of Chinese landscape painting. The fourth paragraph discusses the natural and human elements that should be included in landscape painting and their relationship from the perspective of composition. The fifth paragraph explains the application of Guo Xi's painting method, "Three Distances" or "Three Remoteness". The sixth paragraph points out the real reason why ancient Chinese elites liked landscape painting. The seventh paragraph summarizes the essence of Chinese landscape painting. By assigning productive tasks that require students to summarize or match the main ideas of the paragraphs, teachers can help students achieve a comprehensive understanding of the text.

Secondly, at language level, teachers can guide students to identify words, phrases, and sentence patterns that serve the productive tasks during their independent learning. Words can be summarized according to their parts of speech. For example, verbs such as "*represent, create, depict, respect, and eulogize*" vividly introduce the creative abilities of Chinese landscape painters. Nouns like "*mountain, water, grass, plants, smoke, clouds, rivers, and fisherman*" reflect the natural and human elements in Chinese landscape paintings. Adjectives such as "*natural, profound, spiritual, enchanting, charming, infinite, and philosophical*" showcase the charm of Chinese landscape paintings. Many phrases in the text, especially the English expressions of Chinese idioms, play a finishing touch role, such as "the whole horse is in the heart", "the bamboo is in the heart", and "the valley is in the heart". In terms of sentence patterns, the author uses the structure "not only... but also..." three times. In the first paragraph, "What Chinese painters would like to create in their painting is not only a visual effect of colors and patterns, but (also) a poetic world which exists in their mind." In the third paragraph, "Since the Tang and Song Dynasties, Chinese landscapes not only contain elements of mountains and streams, but also roads extending to the top of mountain ridges and people on roads or boats on the water." In the seventh paragraph, "This is not only the essence of landscape painting but also the essence of traditional Chinese painting in general." In the fifth paragraph, when explaining Guo Xi's "Three Remoteness" method, the author uses a parallel structure to introduce this painting technique: "There are three types of remoteness for a mountain. Viewed from the foot of the mountain to its top, it is remote in height; viewed from the front of the mountain to its back, it is remote in depth; and viewed from an adjacent mountain to the distant mountain in line, it is remote in the horizon." [5]

Thirdly, in terms of discourse structure, POA suggests using exemplary works completed by students or teachers imitating students as input materials for extracting discourse structures. In line with the design of the "iProduce" section in the textbook, teachers can assign a writing task of approximately 300 words on the topic of "Introducing an aspect of Chinese cultural heritage." After studying the "Reading" section in the textbook, students should summarize the discourse structure for introducing Chinese cultural heritage and outline the writing framework, which generally follows a three-part structure. For example, if the topic is the Chinese Spring Festival, the introduction should highlight its significant cultural importance and connotations within Chinese culture. The body of the essay can be divided into three parts: the historical origins of the Spring Festival, the customs associated with it in China, and its impact on the world. The conclusion should summarize the cultural traditions of the Spring Festival and its far-reaching influence around the world. Learning to use typical examples to introduce Chinese cultural heritage is an effective method, just as the author in the textbook uses the example of Guo Xi's painting *Early Spring* to vividly illustrate his views on the painting techniques and aesthetic standards of Chinese landscape painting.

When guiding students to process the input materials, teachers need to provide immediate feedback on whether the students' choices of ideas, language or discourse structures are appropriate, in order to assess the effectiveness of their selective learning. In the Enabling stage, the scaffolding role of the

teacher is most evident. Based on a thorough understanding of the students' learning situation, teachers should determine the extent of assistance to provide.

### 3.2.3 Assessing stage

Assessing stage is of vital importance, as it not only provides a comprehensive understanding of students' English learning progress but also enables teachers to promptly identify and address teaching issues that arise in college English reading and writing instruction. This, in turn, helps teachers to refine their teaching methods and achieve desirable teaching outcomes. During assessing process, teachers should fully utilize educational motivation theories to assist students in identifying and resolving problems more effectively. For example, in reading and writing instruction, teachers can consistently emphasize the role of group cooperation and group assessing. This not only enhances the efficiency of assessing in the classroom but also actively engages students in the teaching activities. Through group assessing, students are encouraged to think critically and ultimately improve their English proficiency and language skills.

## 4. Conclusion

In summary, the core of POA lies in using Production as a driving force to provide more effective guidance for learners, thereby expanding learning channels and enhancing application abilities. To further maximize the effectiveness of POA in college English classrooms, teachers should continue to grasp the compatibility between the two, starting from students' practical application needs. By constantly adjusting shortcomings and improving deficiencies in practice, the teaching value of the POA can be fully realized.

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