

Research on Business English Classroom Teaching Based on Production-oriented Approach-Take Unit 5 of Business English: An Integrated Course as an Example

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Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach (POA), Learning Centered, Business English

Abstract: In order to reform college English course, Professor Wen Qiufang proposed the foreign language teaching theory of Production-oriented Approach (POA). This theory is aimed at changing the traditional teaching method of separating learning and using as well as improving the situation of inefficient language learning. By implementing the three teaching process of motivating, enabling and assessing, this theory can effectively improve students' leaning efficiency. Under the guidance of this theory, this paper applies POA to business English teaching, taking Unit 5 Who has Messed up My Personal Account of the textbook Business English: An Integrated Course as an example.

1. Introduction

At present, as a compulsory course in every college and university, the teaching result of college English is not so desirable. The common problem is that students cannot apply what they learn, cannot even speak in English in daily communication after more than a decade's learning, let alone in workplace. As a consequence, this kind of time-consuming and low efficient teaching method has provoked a deep thought in the whole society, so it is necessary to reform college English course which is an inevitable requirement for the development of English[1]. As an extension of basic education, the importance of college English is challenged day by day. Some famous universities in China have reduced the number of college English classes and weakened the link between CET-4 and CET-6 and academic degrees. Any discipline must adapt to the needs of real life and carry out drastic reforms in order to survive and develop. The POA Professor Wen (2015) proposed is practical, and can improve the current situation of college English teaching to some extent. Some scholars has studied and put the theory into practice and achieved some results.[2]

2. An Overview of POA

The POA theory, a teaching method with typical Chinese characteristics, was proposed by Professor Wen and her team based on the reform of College English curriculum. In 2007, Professor Wen Qiufang proposed the "Output-driven Hypothesis" for the first time, emphasizing the importance of cultivating output skills in foreign language teaching and believing that production can stimulate students' desire and enthusiasm for learning more than input. Later, this hypothesis is further developed into the "Output-driven—Input-enabled Hypothesis", which aims to help teachers

better deal with the input-output relationship in teaching practices. In 2015, POA theory was fully formed.

This theory advocates “learning-centered principle”, that is, all the teaching activities should be aimed at effective learning; “learning-using integrated principle”, that is, students’ input and output should be closely combined; “whole-person education principle”, that is, education should take into account the all-round development of people, reflected in the intellectual, emotional, moral and other aspects[3]. Under the guidance of the above three principles, the following teaching hypothesis are proposed: “Output-driven Hypothesis”, that is, output can increase students’ participation in learning, stimulate students’ enthusiasm for learning, and achieve better learning result; “Input-enabled Hypothesis”, that is, under the Output-driven Hypothesis, providing appropriate input at the right time to facilitate students’ output and promote better learning effect; “Selective Learning Hypothesis” refers to that students select useful parts from many input materials for deep processing, practice and memorization according to output needs. As to how “teaching concept” and “teaching hypothesis” are reflected in teaching practice, the “teaching process” of POA is thus appeared, which includes three aspects: motivating, enabling and assessing. The specific teaching process will be elaborated in the teaching application part[4].

Since POA was put forward, many domestic researchers have carried out a lot of practical research from many aspects, including theoretical construction, textbook compilation, the implementation of each teaching link, their teaching result, and certain research results they obtained.

Wen Qiufang (2017) puts forward four Chinese characteristics of POA: first, it emphasizes the leading role of teachers; Second, it insists that “practice is the only criterion for testing truth”; Third, the integration of curriculum theory and second language acquisition theory; Fourth, adopting problem-oriented strategy and a comprehensive approach to the case[5].

Zhang Lingli (2017) conducted a one-semester teaching experiment to test the teaching result of POA. One hundred and twenty nine non-English major freshmen were divided into the experimental group and the control group, whose English levels have no significant difference. After 12 weeks of teaching experiment, it was found that the English listening, speaking and writing level of students of the experimental group is much better than that of the control group. The students in the experimental group generally believed that the Production-oriented Approach has improved their confidence and interest in English learning, and enhanced their motivation in English learning[6].

Zhang Wenjuan (2017) conducted a two-week experimental study, exploring the influence of Production-oriented Approach on college English writing. It was found that there are no significant differences in the total scores of their writing, the “content”, and the “structure”, but the “language” of the experimental group significantly outscores that of the control group. Besides, the experimental group outscores the control group in the language achievement test.

Qiu Lin (2017) conducted an empirical study in accordance with the teaching process of “motivating-enabling-assessing”, which took 8 class hours. It is found that the principle of language enabling theory has a strong guiding significance, and the gradual language enabling design has a positive effect on students’ language learning.

By adopting the dialectical research (DR) method, Sun Shuguang (2019) uses the in-class phase of writing assessment as an example to examine the path of how Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment theory and classroom practice have been refined simultaneously by means of putting theory into practice and reflecting upon it. This paper optimizes the assessing procedures in class and illuminates the progressive nature of teachers’ guidance, moving from implicit to explicit strategies.

3. Application of POA in Business English Teaching

With the deepening of the degree of social internationalization, trade and business activities between countries are increasingly frequent. Business English, as an important tool for international communication, is obviously playing an increasingly important role. In order to cater for and promote this kind of economic situation, many colleges and universities set up business English majors to train specialized business English talents. The purpose of business English teaching is to improve students' English level, at the same time, impart knowledge related to economic activities, business activities, such as the foreign enterprise management idea, the management mode, working modes, as well as the cultural background, social etiquette and habits of people from different cultures. In the process of business English teaching, there are also some problems, such as teachers adopting traditional teaching methods, students' poor learning result and the separation of learning and application. As a more practical discipline which emphasizes communication in business context compared to college English, the urgency of Business English reform is not less than that of college English.

The POA proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang is mainly designed for college English. The author believes that the teaching method that has achieved some results in college English is also suitable for business English teaching. Fundamentally, they both are language learning. The effectiveness of business English teaching can be promoted by adding the input of relevant business knowledge and strengthening the output of business objectives. As a result, the author chooses Unit 5 Who Has Messed up My Personal Account? in book Business English: An Integrated Course as an example to illustrate the the process of business English teaching under the guidance of POA.

3.1 Teaching Objectives

(1) The language objective of this unit is to learn the words, phrases and language points related to the unit, as well as the use of language points and English tenses; the Business objectives of this unit are to understand the terms of banking and business, to understand the trouble caused by the use of credit cards, and to be able to communicate effectively in a business environment; the communication objective is to understand the advantages and disadvantages of using credit cards and to communicate on this topic in the language you have learned.

(2) The output task is divided into two parts. The first is oral output task which should be completed in class: the group tries to produce and simulates a debate competition with the theme of "Whether college students should use credit cards". The second is the writing task output which should be carried out after class: the individual completes a composition based on the above topic.

3.2 Teaching Process

The teaching process of POA includes three aspects: motivating, enabling and assessing.

(1) Motivating

The teaching steps of motivating include: (1) teachers present communicative scenarios (scenarios should be realistic and cognitively challenging); (2) Students try to complete the communicative activities (if students fail to complete the activities, they will realize their language deficiency and have the desire to learn); (3) Teachers explain teaching objectives and output tasks (output objectives should be appropriate). According to the topic of this unit, the teacher presents the students with the following three communication scenarios.

Scenarios 1: A debate will be held in the college recently: In recent years, the banking business has entered the campus, an increasing number of college students without financial means begin to use credit cards, which has aroused wide concern in the society. So, should college students use

credit cards? Four students act as the affirmative debaters: College students should use credit cards; four students act as the negative debaters: College students should not use credit cards.

Scenarios 2: Role-play. A recent graduate (student A) is going to a bank to get a credit card. He is going to ask the bank clerk (student B) about the card. Student B gives a detailed explanation of the card application process and explained to student A the benefits and convenience of using credit cards. Therefore, student A filled in the application form and waited for the approval of the bank.

Scenarios 3: Show the students the news about the serious consequences caused by the bad records of college students in the process of using credit cards, and ask students to describe the phenomenon and express their own views on the phenomenon.

After knowing the communication scenarios, students are divided into groups of eight to try to complete the communication activities, and report the results of the discussion, and try to produce. At this time, due to their own lack of language ability, students cannot smoothly produce, when they realize their language deficiency, they will have a desire to learn, resulting in the “hunger state” of learning. Then the teacher explains the teaching objectives to the students from three aspects: communication, language and business.

(2) Enabling

Step 1: Show the students the news about the use of credit cards by college students, input accurately, and ask the students to try to describe the phenomenon and express their own views on the news as well as their attitudes on credit cards. At the same time, provide students with relevant language expressions, relevant information about campus loans, its characteristics and risks as well as how to prevent the risks of campus loan. Let the students discuss and express their attitudes on this kind of online lending platform.

Step 2: Show the table on page 115 of the textbook to students, and let the students learn and use the relevant language expressions according to the experience of the couple in the table, pay attention to the ups and downs of their credit scores and summarize the matters needing attention when using credit cards.

Step 3: The teacher asks students to summarize the general idea of the article and analyze the overall structure of the article based on the text and guided by the essay questions and the true or false questions on page 120.

Step 4: Read and fill in the blanks, or translate English and Chinese to each other, accurately deal with the difficult points, let the students repeatedly practice the target words, phrases and sentence patterns.

Step 5: With the help of relevant target words and phrases, let the students retell the general idea of the article, gradually produce, and constantly increase the difficulty of the output. Finally, let the students complete the output task with the language and writing skills mastered above.

In the process of enabling, teachers should pay attention to its three requirements: gradualness, accuracy and diversity, and finally achieve the effectiveness of enabling. Teachers should give full play to the intermediary role and guide students to selectively learn the input materials.

(3) Assessing

Assessing can be divided into immediate and delayed methods. Immediate assessment is carried out in the enabling process. Teachers evaluate the learning result of students in the production process of group tasks, correct mistakes in time and put forward suggestions for modification. Delayed assessment refers to after-class assessment, in which students repeatedly study and practice after class and hand in the compositions to the teacher, who corrects and reviews the compositions after class and selects good samples for analysis in the next class. The combination of immediate and delayed assessment mechanism can facilitate students to complete the output task more effectively. Most students can present high-quality compositions to the teacher through repeated practice after class, and improve their learning efficiency. At the same time, according to POA, the

assessment also includes teacher-student collaborative assessment.

The Production-oriented Approach pays special attention to the effective assessment of student's language production. In order to cope with the challenges of large college English classes and heavy workload of teachers in China, the Production-oriented Approach puts forward a new idea of Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment to organize and balance teacher assessment and other types of assessments. Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment includes three phases: pre-class, in-class and post-class. Before class, the teacher selects and critically reviews a few samples based on the learning objectives of the unit. In class, students first think independently, then exchange views in pairs or groups, and next, discuss with others in the whole class under the guidance of teacher. The teacher gives timely comments prepared in advances. After class, on the basis of teachers' professional guidance in class, students use self-assessment or peer assessment to supplement the Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment. Among them, peer assessment means that after students knowing the evaluation standard, they evaluate each other according to this standard, express their own views and give their own suggestions.

Assessment is one of the most important link in the teaching process, and assessment itself is a kind of opportunities for further study, students can find their own shortcomings when evaluating other students' work, learn the strengths of others. Collaborative assessment between teachers and students can increase the participation of students, let students further rethink their own work and have a clearer sense about themselves.

4. Conclusion

Different from traditional teaching methods, POA, which is more practical and realistic, changes the previous "student-centered theory" and adopts "learning-centered principle" and "learning-using integrated principle". They are designed for changing the boring classroom and the situation of separation between learning and application, promoting students' learning desire and stimulating students' learning enthusiasm. More importantly, POA can increase the opportunities for students to apply what they have learned, improve their learning efficiency, and cultivate their ability to express themselves. It can not only meet their career needs, but also develop their ability to accurately and positively present the image of China, spread Chinese culture, and enhance the country's soft power. Based on POA, this paper makes a new attempt at business English teaching practice, which improves students' participation in class and achieves certain teaching effects. However, some aspects of classroom teaching still need to be polished and improved, and there are some difficulties and problems in the implementation process. It is hoped that this teaching method with Chinese characteristics will continue to develop and improve, so as to truly promote learning efficiency and achieve a breakthrough in the development of foreign language teaching in China.

Acknowledgement

This research supported by Graduate Education Research Program of National Translation and Interpreting Major (PN: MTIJZW202133); This research supported by Major Theoretical and Practical Research Program of Philosophy and Social Science in Shaanxi Province (PN: 2021HZ-863)

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