

From Input to Output: Applying the Production-Oriented Approach in Comprehensive Chinese Courses

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Abstract: A comprehensive Chinese course is a typical type of course in foreign studies of Chinese that integrates vocabulary and grammar, texts, culture, and the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many learners still find it difficult to apply what they have learned in class. The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is in response to this problem and will treat the output as both the result of learning and the driving force for further study. This paper explores how to apply POA to all-round Chinese courses based on the logic of "input for output". It suggests that teachers should start each unit with a meaningful production task, diagnose learners' output gaps, provide targeted input, organize enabling activities, and use formative assessment for revision support. The paper will also list classroom procedures, examples, advantages, deficiencies, etc., of application. It is expected that, when adapted to different proficiency levels and communication needs of students, POA can provide support for all-round Chinese teaching that is more practical and student-centered.

1. Introduction

The all-Chinese course serves as the support for the second and foreign-language Chinese courses. Unlike single-skill courses, it generally integrates new words, grammar structures, texts, listening and speaking practice, reading comprehension, writing tasks and cultural knowledge in a single teaching unit. Although this integrated design has a good foundation for the course, it is also susceptible to the common problem that students may be exposed to a large volume of Chinese but lack the confidence to use it in actual communication.

Teaching in many classrooms is still in the traditional mode. Teachers first teach vocabulary and grammar, then have students complete exercises, and only at the end are there communicative activities. Although the above steps can help students learn some language forms, they do not provide sufficient support for independent word selection, sentence construction or the execution of communicative purposes. As a result, learners may have a basic understanding of Chinese but still be hesitant to speak, write, communicate, etc., in Chinese.

The Production-Oriented Approach can be used to solve this problem. Wen believes that to address the separation between learning and application, POA can organise instruction that covers motivation, enabling, and evaluation^[1]. For all-Chinese courses, this system is highly appropriate because they have rich input materials and various forms of output. Teachers can organise the content of textbooks

according to production tasks and help students apply their language knowledge in real life.

2. Theoretical Basis of POA

The first goal of theoretical purposes for POA is to enable us to know about input-output connections. Input is required for language learning, but it will be more effective if the learners have a clear goal for using it. Output shows that the learning has taken place, and this also stimulates more learning. When students try to complete a task, they will learn what they are able to do and what they are not. This process of noticing is likely to generate new words, structures and patterns in language.

The above logic is required by Chinese Language Education. Pronunciation, characters, word order, particles and pragmatic conventions in Chinese may be difficult for learners with very different first languages. Teachers offer the students information but fail to set specific learning objectives. However, when the input is linked to a specific task, students can learn why that particular expression is required. For example, a student who has to role-play renting an apartment will naturally need vocabulary such as price, location, size, transportation and living conditions, as well as sentence patterns for comparison, preference and negotiation.

Research on POA has also tried to reduce the difference between input and output in language classes^[2]. Therefore, POA will not reject explanation, practice or textual analysis. It will now lead these parts. The teacher asks what the students want to make, then selects and arranges the inputs to help them create it.

3. Principles for Task Design

The first is to set a purpose for the production task in POA. A task should be closely related to the theme of the unit, the content of the textbook, and students' real-life needs. For example, in a unit on renting an apartment, the final output may be a landlord-tenant role-play, a short rental advertisement, or a comparison of two apartments. In a unit on seeing a doctor, students can produce a doctor-patient conversation or a health-advice poster. In the unit on Chinese festivals, they can prepare and deliver a brief introduction to a festival for their foreign friends.

A good task has the following characteristics. Firstly, it should be genuine or appear to be so. Students should be able to see how the tasks relate to their lives outside of school. Second, it should be difficult but feasible. If the task is too easy, there will be no learning motivation; if it is too difficult, students will be unable to learn. Thirdly, it should require the target vocabulary, grammar and discourse patterns of the unit. Otherwise, the amount of input and output will be too large. Fourth, it should be achievable, and students and teachers know what successful completion looks like.

The teacher sets a problem and then identifies what language materials are needed to solve it. These resources can be words and sentence patterns, as well as pronunciation features, cultural knowledge, pragmatic expressions and text organisation. There is no need to provide a large number of inputs; only those that are highly relevant to achieving the desired results need to be offered.

4. Motivating Stage: Creating Output Needs

The motivating stage initiates the POA teaching cycle. At this time, the teacher can create a communicative situation and have the students try to complete a task before they have fully learned the content of that lesson. The Goal is not Optimal Performance. The teacher helps the students find out where they are lacking in production. Before a unit on ordering food, for example, students can act out ordering at a Chinese restaurant. Soon they will find that they do not know how to ask about food taste, order dishes, express dietary restrictions, or politely speak with restaurant staff.

This first time changes the students' learning states. They are no longer the recipients of lectures.

They are now problem-solvers who know why new inputs are needed. The teacher can ask a leading question for students' reflection, such as: What do you wish you could have said but did not? Which expressions were not shown? Which Sentence Patterns were difficult? What culture does it contain? These questions create a learning drive from output failure.

The Motivation Stage in a general Chinese class is relatively short but effective. It may take the form of a role-playing game, picture description, short-writing practice, group discussion, problem-solving activities, etc. The teacher should not correct all the errors at this time. The teacher collects the above common problems and uses them to organize the following enabling stage.

5. Enabling Stage: Connecting Input and Output

The foundation of POA-based teaching is the enabling stage. At this time, the teacher gives some directions and supports some exercises. Selective input is not given to all the content of the textbook. The teacher will choose some vocabulary, grammar, text features and cultural knowledge that are useful for the final task.

Enablement activities should move from controlled practice to semi-controlled practice and then to free expression. At first, the students may do substitution drills, pronunciation practice, matching exercises, sentence transformation, or short-answer questions. These activities help them learn accurately. Then they will be able to complete information-gap tasks, reconstruct dialogues, summarise short texts and prepare responses in the target structure. Finally, they return to their original production work and complete it in a full-fledged and independent manner.

Each enabling activity needs to connect the input with the output. If an activity does not help the students achieve their final goal, then it should be changed or deleted. Based on the systematic review of POA research, production tasks, teacher support and the input-output relationship are the focus of application in this study^[3]. Therefore, the all-encompassing teaching of Chinese should not divide vocabulary, grammar, reading and speaking into separate parts in the classroom. They need to achieve certain production goals.

6. Vocabulary, Grammar, and Text Teaching

Vocabulary teaching can be improved by POA, and words are to be used in expression. Traditional vocabulary teaching usually has the sequence of reading, explaining, translating and memorising. This way is good but not ideal. In a real shopping setting, students will learn practical vocabulary such as expensive, cheap, discount, try on, size, and suitable. Students can compare the price, request a different size, politely negotiate, or recommend a product. The teacher can also use chunks such as "Can it be a little cheaper?" or "This colour looks good on you" to help learners gain fluency.

Organise grammar teaching based on the requirements for output as well. Rather than presenting the structure and then its purpose, it is possible to introduce grammar through a problem that needs to be solved. Students may need to use the "ba" construction when explaining how to arrange a room, comparative structures to choose between travel plans, or the particle "le" to report completed experiences^[4]. Therefore, grammar will serve to express oneself rather than be a set of rules.

Text Teaching Also Changes Under POA. The text is to be translated and used in comprehension activities, and at the same time, it can be produced. Teachers can have students observe how a text organises information, connects ideas, shows emotions, etc., and what cultural values are contained in it. Then the students can create their own dialogues, presentations or short stories in the same environment.

7. Classroom Application Example

A unit on "asking for directions" can show the process. Finally, design and carry out a campus tour and introduction session for new international students. In the motivation stage, the teacher will show the campus map and have students help a visitor find the library, cafeteria and dormitory. Students can try to speak, but they lack expressions such as "go straight", "turn left", "opposite", "next to", and "about five minutes' walk", and thus have an immediate learning need.

In the enabling stage, the teacher presents a model dialogue, teaches location words and direction phrases, practices pronunciation and tones, and organises map-based information-gap activities. Then, the students create a route and practice with their partner. Sentence frames such as "Go straight first", "Turn left at the second crossing", and "The library is next to the teaching building" can reduce the level of difficulty but still need to make meaningful choices.

Students conduct the dialogues in the assessment period. The teacher and classmates assess the clarity, accuracy, politeness and task completion of this. Students correct the dialogue based on the teacher's feedback and try again. This cycle of production, support, feedback and revision helps students move from unfinished works to good-communication works.

8. Assessment and Feedback

Assessments in POA should not be seen as grades. The teacher helps students learn, think, and become better. The comprehensiveness of the rubric for the general Chinese course should include the communicative goal, language accuracy, fluency, vocabulary usage, grammar application, pronunciation, organization of thoughts, etc. The teacher sets clear goals and ensures students know what they are aiming for.

Peer assessment can also be used to teach students by observing the work produced by others. After the group presents on the culture of Chinese food, for example, other students can offer feedback on the clarity of the content, whether it is delivered naturally, and how effectively the speakers engage the audience^[5]. The teacher then provides specific feedback and has the students correct the written script or repeat a part of the oral task.

Evaluation of the process and results. If only the final results are assessed, students will not study in preparation or review. The Norms for Assessment are not specific. Thus, the teacher can evaluate the preparation notes, participation in the enabling activity, first draft, revised output, final performance and reflection. The above will be carried out.

9. Challenges and Implementation Strategies

The first problem is task Design. A good production task should be genuine, practical, feasible and measurable. These tasks have complicated designs and are not straightforward. Teachers who are accustomed to textbook-based teaching may be concerned that task-based teaching will reduce the time available for grammar and exam preparation. Therefore, the task should be based on the goals in the textbook and not an addition.

The second is the selection of the input. Teachers are under pressure to teach all the words and grammar rules, but POA needs to be selected based on the output goals. Therefore, one can divide the principal inputs and the additional inputs. The primary input is taught and practised in class because it will be directly used for the final work. Supplementary input can be used for self-study or extension.

The third is the difference in learners. Some students are good speakers, and others are not. The teacher provides tiered support, including sentence starters, word banks, exemplars, differentiated roles, and re-teaching as needed. Lower-level students need more controlled practice, and higher-

level students can be given more open-ended tasks.

Digital Tools Can Also Support Implementation. Teachers can post short videos, vocabulary pre-learning, pronunciation recordings or other cultural materials before class. Students can work together in class to use a shared document or discussion area. After class, they can upload the oral recordings and revise the writing and conduct peer review.

10. Conclusion

The Production-Oriented Approach offers a new model for the improvement of all-around Chinese classes. The first is that schools no longer transmit knowledge but facilitate students' active construction of knowledge. A well-designed lesson should set a clear output goal to give students a reason to learn, provide targeted input to equip them with necessary language, incorporate enabling activities that foster communication, and use formative assessment to drive ongoing revision and improvement.

POA needs to be well-designed, flexible in management and reasonable in evaluation, but it has certain strengths. The teacher makes our comprehensive Chinese courses more practical, integrated, and learner-focused. More significantly, it enables students to move from "knowing Chinese" to "using Chinese", thus achieving the aim of international Chinese language education. Future teaching will continue to adapt POA for all levels of learners, diverse cultures and institutions.

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