

The Study of the Teacher's Role in the Application of POA to College English Teaching

Ming Jiang

Shanghai Civil Aviation College, Shanghai 200232, China

ABSTRACT

The article explores the teacher's role in the application of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) to College English teaching. Since the 1980s, College English for non-English majors has been an essential part of general education in China, and its focus has shifted from language to holistic and humanistic education. The POA, proposed in 2015, emphasizes that all in-class and after-class activities serve the purpose of production tasks for students. It consists of teaching principles, hypotheses, and a three-phase teaching procedure. In the application of POA, the teacher's role changes from a lecturer to a mentor, organizer, and motivator. Taking the second unit of the textbook as an example, the paper demonstrates the teacher's role in different phases. The significant change in the teacher's role requires the teacher to update teaching methods and strategies to support students' language learning progress.

KEYWORDS

POA; College English; Teaching approach

1 Introduction

College English for non-English majors has always been an integral component of general education in institutions of higher learning in China since the 1980s. With the development of China's social economy and the evolution of academic conditions, the focus of this course transforms from the language itself to the holistic and humanistic education of the students. Since 2022, the status of vocational education has been elevated according to the *Vocational Education Law*, in which vocational education is asserted to be as important as general education. In *Junior College English Curriculum Standards for Vocational Education*, four core competencies of the students are emphasized: competency in international communication in vocational settings, competency in multicultural exchange, competency in advanced thinking and competency in higher-level learning autonomy. Therefore, the College English course for students in vocational school needs reforming in accordance with the new requirements and numerous teaching theories and methodologies are applied to optimize the language teaching procedure.

2 The POA Theoretical System

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is a teaching theory proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang from Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2015. POA advocates that all the in-class and after-class activities are to serve the purpose of production tasks for the students. Through the participation in the activities in class, students are supposed to acquire the useful expressions, gain the ability to express themselves with the language and understand and manage to handle the

cultural differences between Chinese and Western culture. POA is basically composed of three parts: teaching principles, teaching hypotheses and teaching procedure^[1].

The teaching principles which serve as guiding rules for the other two parts, include Learning-centered Principle, Learning-using Integrated Principle and Whole-person Education Principle. These principles emphasize the effective learning and the interrelation of input and output in the learning process and aim at holistic and humanist education of the students through language learning. The teaching hypotheses which serve as the theoretical foundation for the teaching procedure include Output-driven Hypothesis, Input-enabled Hypothesis and Selective Learning Hypothesis. In accordance with these hypotheses, the teaching procedure consists of three phases, namely Motivating, Enabling and Accessing. Based on the output-driven Hypothesis, in the Motivating phase of the teaching procedure, scenarios are assigned to the students, which may be challenging and may arouse the eagerness of the students to learn in the Enabling phase of the procedure.

3 The Teacher's Role in POA

Unlike traditional methods of language teaching in junior vocational colleges, in which teachers spend most of the class time lecturing and primarily focus on the language itself, POA requires teachers to play different roles in different phases of teaching. The role of teachers in POA shifts from a lecturer to a mentor, an organizer and a motivator of learning interest. In this part, the second unit of the viewing and speaking textbook *Forward English* is taken as an example to demonstrate the teacher's role in different phases of teaching and analyze its difference from the roles of the teachers in traditional English class. The students are sophomores majoring in in-flight service management^[2].

Teaching Objectives

Before the discussion of the roles of the teacher, we should clarify the teaching objectives of this course. The primary objective of this course is to enhance students' English proficiency and linguistic aptitude, particularly emphasizing their productive language skills through diverse training methodologies. Concurrently, the course aims to foster their cross-cultural communicative abilities. However, paramount to these pursuits is the integration of China's enduring and distinctive traditions, culture, and values into the students' ethos. This integration is designed to equip them for the situation of intercultural communication while also positioning them as ambassadors of these traditions cultures and values. Therefore after learning this unit, students should be able to

A. master the words and expressions related to Chinese cuisine, Western food and dinning etiquette.

B. realize the cultural differences between Chinese and Western dietary culture and behave accordingly.

C. give a brief introduction of Chinese food and dietary culture to foreign friends with the correct choice of the words and expressions.

D. enhance the understanding of Chinese dietary culture and become more confident about the Chinese value and culture in intercultural communication.

4 Motivating Phase

Normally in traditional English class, the first phase of the teaching procedure is warming-up in which the students are involved in activities that may arouse their interests in the topic of the unit, which might help the students have a better understanding of the topic, but they are not motivated to fulfill the output task. According to POA, the teaching process should be production-oriented.

Therefore, in the first phase of teaching, motivating, the teacher should present to the students a scenario that might be related to the future usage of the language or their career, which would arouse not only the interesting but also the eagerness of the students to learn, and in the meantime, pose a challenge to the students' language productive ability, mentally preparing the students for the next phase, enabling.

When preparing for the motivating phase, the teacher needs to select the material in accordance with the purpose of motivation as well as the language capability of the students. In junior vocational college, the English language capability is not as good as it is in universities, and the gap between the students with high and low English capability is comparatively large. Therefore, two pieces of video: *Western Food and Chinese Food* and *Western Table Manners (for kids)* are selected as cases to be presented in class. Both of them are short and the difficulty are calibrated based on the students' performance of the previous semester so as not to frustrate the students while motivating. During preparation, the teacher is the language coach, challenging the students while showing them the way to progress^[3].

In class, with the video clips presentation, the topic of *Food and Culture* is introduced. Then the class is divided into groups discussing the features of western cuisine and the difference between Chinese and Western table manners. After the discussion, each group would choose one of the two topics and have one student in the group to make a speech about it. While the students are discussing, the teacher would walk around the classroom, monitoring the discussion to ensure the students are on the right track. As a supervisor the teacher should also encourage the students to talk more by asking different questions that is hard enough to motivate them but not too difficult or frustrating. After the speeches made by the students, the teacher could talk about different aspects that can be discussed when talking about food, for instance ingredients, cooking method, origin, history and so on. And ask the students to choose one dish from their hometown to talk about. In this way, the students may relate the language they are learning with their own life experience and they would be better motivated. On the other hand, by talking about the food from their hometown, they can have a better understanding of the Chinese culture and their cultural confidence may be boosted.

5 Enabling Phase

After the discussion and the speech, the students have more or less realized the difficulties in talking about food and dietary culture. It is the right time for the teacher to introduce the first part in the text book as a preparation for the students. In this part, a video clip named *Food in China* talks about typical Chinese food. The students are required to finish this part of the exercise on their cellphone application so that they can watch the video clip over and over again to prepare their own speech with the help of the vocabulary and expressions in the video and the text book. Adequate time should be given to the students after checking the answers of the exercise so they may have enough time to make use of the expression from the video clip^[4-5].

In this part of the POA, the Input-enabling hypothesis and Selective-learning hypothesis are prominently featured which means after the motivating part where the students' eagerness to learn expressions that can be used in their own speech are boosted, they can make use of the input materials to improve their own output task, and they can learn selectively to enrich their content, polish their expression or improve the discourse structure. The fundamental function of the input material is to help with their content. In this class, the video clip *Food in China* and the listening material *The Benefits of Chocolate* provide the students with the basic way of thinking for their contents. The students can accumulate useful language forms like words and expressions as well as

discourse structures from the material. Students can do this following their own language capacity by choosing the parts they need in their own speech. The teacher's role is to help the students to learn selectively so as to fulfill the function of "scaffold" as is mentioned in Wen's theory. For students who find the output task too difficult, the teacher can also set up sub-tasks before asking the students to finish the ultimate task. For example, the teacher can ask the students who find the productive task challenging find the useful vocabulary and expressions that can be use in their own speech. While it seems that the students are collecting the words and expressions from the text book and listening material, they are, in fact, carefully selected by the teacher when preparing the lesson, so that when the teacher asks the students to make sentences with the words and expressions, the teacher is guiding the students to produce the speech step by step. Additionally the teacher can help the students by comparing the difference between Chinese and western culinary culture, through which the students can learn have to behave properly in both culture.

6 Assessing Phase

With respect to the assessment, the diagnostic and formative classroom assessment implemented in the enabling stage was deployed throughout the entire course of students' learning and practicing the sub-tasks. Students were judged in accordance with whether they actively participated in classroom activities and made any progress. Furthermore, the achievement assessment, which was conducted to ascertain whether students had fulfilled the objectives of the unit, was intended to evaluate students' language products. Consequently, the assessment was both formative and summative.

The assessment can also be categorized into instantaneous assessment and delayed assessment. The instantaneous assessment is implemented during the enabling phase when selective learning and the formulation of the output task, or sub-task if necessary, are underway. The instantaneous assessment enables the teacher to adjust the pace of the class based on the feedback from each task provided by the students and, simultaneously, expedite the students' process of task completion.

The delayed assessment would be employed for the evaluation of the reviewing output task and the transferring output task. After the class, the students integrate the skills from each mini-task in the class and eventually are required to complete the output task, such as a speech or a report as mentioned in the enabling phase, which is referred to as the reviewing output task. For the group leaders or representatives in the class, the teacher might request them to undertake more challenging tasks after the class, which are designated as the transferring output tasks, by utilizing the skills or content learned in the class since they have accomplished the reviewing output task in the class.

With the learning website and application, peer assessment can be readily achieved. The homework of the viewing and speaking class is typically submitted online in the form of video or audio. The teacher can make the homework accessible to all the students in the class so that they can grade the homework and learn from one another. Since whole-person education is one of the three principles of POA, peer assessment is a potent tool to assist the students in becoming more responsible as they are accountable for part of each other's grades.

7 Conclusion

Through the application of POA to the practice of the viewing and speaking class, the role of the teacher has changed significantly. Challenges are not only imposed on the teachers but also on the

students. For the teachers, on the one hand, the preparation for the class becomes more complex as they are the organizers of more activities compared to the traditional class. Additionally, they need to focus on the enhancement of the students' ability rather than merely the content of the textbook as in the traditional class. For the students, the main challenge lies in overcoming shyness when using the language, especially for those whose oral English is not proficient enough. Therefore, the teacher needs to act as the students' mentor to guide, assist, and encourage them. The implementation of POA in the viewing and speaking class has redefined the teacher's role. This requires the teacher to possess a higher level of pedagogical skills, flexibility, and a deep understanding of student psychology. To successfully fulfill this new role and overcome the associated challenges, the teacher must constantly update their teaching methods and strategies, and remain committed to providing unwavering support and inspiration to ensure that students can thrive and make significant progress in their language learning journey.

About the Author

Ming Jiang, Lecturer, Master of Arts in Literature from Shanghai International Studies University. Research Interests: English teaching methodology and British and American literature.

References

- [1] WANG J. The application of the POA in college English teaching[J]. *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, 2022, 10(4): 59-65.
- [2] WEN Q F. Output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis: A tentative theory of foreign language classroom instruction for university students[J]. *Foreign Language Education in China*, 2014, 2: 1-12.
- [3] WEN Q F. Developing a theoretical system of the production-oriented approach in language teaching[J]. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 2015, 4: 547-558.
- [4] WEN Q F. Chinese features displayed in the production oriented approach[J]. *Modern Foreign Languages*, 2017, 5: 348-358.
- [5] WEN Q F. Production-oriented approach in teaching Chinese as a second language[J]. *Chinese Teaching in the World*, 2018, 3: 387-400.