

A Study on the Production-oriented Approach in Oral English Teaching for Five-year Higher Vocational Education Students

Chenwei Wang

Zhenjiang Vocational Technical College, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: The Production-oriented Approach (POA) is a teaching model rooted in the principles of "learning through use" and "applying what is learned," emphasizing the promotion of students' learning through practical English usage, thereby enhancing their practical English application abilities. This paper first conducts an in-depth theoretical analysis of the Production-oriented Approach. Subsequently, it delves into the current situation and issues of oral English teaching in five-year higher vocational education. Finally, through practical teaching case studies, relevant suggestions and measures are proposed. It is hoped that these suggestions and measures will contribute to further improving the oral English teaching capabilities of English teachers at Zhenjiang Vocational Technical College.

Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach; Five-Year Higher Vocational Education; Oral English Teaching

1. Introduction

The POA is a foreign language teaching theory with distinct Chinese characteristics proposed by the team led by Professor Wen Qiufang, a Chinese foreign language educator^[1]. This theoretical framework comprises three key aspects: teaching philosophy, teaching hypotheses, and teaching procedures. The teaching hypotheses include output-driven and input-enabled principles, believing that output can stimulate learning motivation while input provides necessary support for output. The teaching procedures follow a cyclic model of "motivating - enabling - assessing."

In the teaching of oral English in five-year higher vocational education, the POA holds significant importance. Traditional oral English teaching often deviates from practical situations, making it difficult for students to apply what they have learned. In contrast, the POA can design teaching content around real-life communication scenarios,

such as simulated workplace dialogues, enabling students to have something meaningful to talk about. Meanwhile, its diversified evaluation system can comprehensively assess students' oral English abilities, allowing them to make timely improvements. Additionally, the teacher's role transforms into that of a guide and organizer of students' learning, which can fully mobilize students' learning enthusiasm, cultivate their autonomous learning abilities, and effectively enhance their practical oral English application skills.

1.1 Teaching Philosophies

The teaching philosophies of POA include the learning-centeredness, the integration of learning and using, and the whole-person education. The learning-centeredness philosophy emphasizes the importance of teaching objectives^[2]. Teachers should combine various teaching activities such as lectures, group discussions, and presentations, with the fundamental goal of achieving these objectives. The integration of learning and using philosophy advocates learning a little and applying a little, achieving seamless integration between learning and using. Using language promotes learning, and learning is for application, which helps improve students' practical language application abilities. The whole-person education philosophy focuses on students' all-round development, enhancing their comprehensive qualities and cross-cultural communication skills through foreign language learning.

1.2 Teaching Hypotheses

The teaching hypotheses of the POA consist of the output-driven hypothesis, the input-enabled hypothesis, and the selective learning hypothesis^[3]. The output-driven hypothesis stimulates students' learning motivation and improves learning effectiveness by setting productive tasks. The input-enabled hypothesis emphasizes the importance of input, considering it as the key to enabling output. The selective learning hypothesis suggests that through

selective learning, students can more efficiently master the required language knowledge and skills. It opposes the traditional "intensive reading" approach and advocates selective learning.

1.3 Teaching Procedures

The teaching procedures of the POA include three stages: motivating, enabling, and assessing^[4]. In the motivating stage, teachers present communicative scenarios through activities, making the topics seem challenging to students. When students attempt communicative activities and find that seemingly simple productive tasks are not easy to complete, they experience pressure and motivation. In the enabling stage, teachers describe the specific requirements and steps of the productive tasks, and students engage in selective learning and check their learning outcomes. The assessing stage includes immediate assessment, delayed assessment, and peer assessment. Immediate assessment refers to teachers providing timely feedback to students during the enabling stage to help them correct errors and adjust learning strategies. Delayed assessment occurs after the completion of the productive tasks, where teachers conduct a comprehensive and objective evaluation of students' work, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses and offering suggestions for improvement. Peer assessment encourages students to evaluate each other, which not only cultivates their critical thinking skills but also allows them to learn from and draw on others' strengths during the evaluation process^[5].

Although POA was initially proposed for intermediate and advanced foreign language learners, the author believes that its theoretical system is not exclusive to English teaching in five-year higher vocational education. Firstly, the POA emphasizes a student-centered approach and focuses on stimulating students' learning interests and enthusiasm. In the process of English teaching in five-year higher vocational schools, where students generally have relatively weak English foundations, teachers need to transform their roles from traditional knowledge transmitters to learning guides and facilitators, so that students can pay more attention to self-exploration and practice. Secondly, the POA prioritizes students' language application abilities. This teaching method emphasizes students' actual language application abilities, enabling them to better understand and master the language and

improve their language proficiency. Thirdly, the POA pays attention to the practicality and life-relatedness of teaching content. While learning the language, students can also gain insights into relevant cultural backgrounds and social phenomena.

2. Current Situation and Problems in Oral English Teaching in Five-Year Higher Vocational Education

In recent years, in five-year English education system, traditional teaching methods often exhibit a phenomenon of 'separation between learning and using.' That is, students merely memorize vocabulary and grammar mechanically during the English learning process, neglecting the practical application of English, particularly oral expression. This traditional approach to oral English teaching, on the one hand, fails to enhance students' practical English application abilities; on the other hand, it can lead to students developing a sense of boredom towards English learning, thereby affecting their learning outcomes.

2.1 Current Situation of Oral English Teaching in Five-Year Higher Vocational Education

From the perspective of teaching content, oral English teaching in five-year higher vocational education primarily revolves around practical themes such as daily life and work scenarios. While this practical-oriented teaching approach enables students to acquire a certain level of oral expression ability within a short period, it has certain limitations in terms of depth and breadth. For instance, students may be fluent in everyday conversations but struggle when it comes to expressing themselves on professional topics or conveying complex emotions.

From the perspective of teaching methods, currently, most teachers still adopt the traditional "teacher explanation - student imitation - repetitive practice" model^[6]. This model, to some extent, neglects students' subjectivity and is not conducive to cultivating their innovative thinking and critical thinking abilities. Additionally, due to the lack of an effective evaluation mechanism, teachers often find it difficult to accurately gauge students' learning progress and thus cannot make targeted teaching adjustments.

From the perspective of students' learning attitudes and motivations, given the difficulty of English learning, which requires a significant investment of time and effort, it is challenging for

students to achieve ideal learning outcomes if they lack sustained motivation and interest. However, in current teaching practices, there is often an overemphasis on knowledge transmission while neglecting the stimulation of students' learning interests and enthusiasm.

From the perspective of the allocation and utilization of teaching resources, despite the increasing abundance of various digital teaching resources with the development of technology in recent years, how to effectively utilize these resources to improve teaching efficiency and quality remains an urgent issue to be addressed in actual teaching^[7].

2.2 Problems in Oral English Teaching in Five-Year Higher Vocational Education

Analyzing from the perspective of teaching content, a prominent issue is the disconnect between the content and actual needs. In the current teaching content, there is an overemphasis on grammar and vocabulary instruction while neglecting the practical application of oral English. This results in students possessing a certain amount of linguistic knowledge but feeling inadequate in real-life applications. Moreover, the updating speed of teaching content fails to keep pace with societal developments and cannot promptly reflect changes and advancements in the language.

Analyzing from the perspective of teaching methods, the traditional teaching model still dominates. This "spoon-feeding" teaching approach neglects students' subjectivity, leading to a lack of enthusiasm and initiative in the learning process. Although the POA, as a novel teaching model, has demonstrated its superiority in some studies, its application in oral English teaching in five-year higher vocational education remains limited.

Analyzing from the perspective of students' learning motivations, many students lack interest in English learning, perceiving English merely as a tool for passing exams rather than a practical communication tool. This negative learning attitude severely impacts their learning outcomes^[8].

Analyzing from the perspective of teachers' professional qualities and teaching abilities, some teachers lack an in-depth understanding and mastery of the POA theory and cannot effectively integrate it into their teaching. Meanwhile, due to the absence of an effective teaching feedback mechanism, teachers often find it challenging to

promptly identify and address students' learning problems.

3. Research on the Application of the Production-Oriented Approach in Oral English Teaching in Five-Year Higher Vocational Education

Guided by the POA and combined with the teaching context of five-year higher vocational English education, this paper takes Unit 7 "Safety is Everyone's Responsibility" from the third volume of the cultural course textbook for vocational schools in Jiangsu Province as a teaching case to analyze the application of the POA in oral English teaching for five-year higher vocational students at Zhenjiang Vocational Technical college.

3.1 Teaching Targets

The students are second-year students majoring in the Internet of Things at Zhenjiang Vocational Technical college. They have relatively weak English foundations, limited vocabulary, and lack oral expression abilities. However, they have positive learning attitudes and are interested in practical operations and simulated scenarios.

3.2 Teaching Objectives

Students should be able to accurately memorize and use at least 15 professional English vocabulary terms and phrases related to safety, such as "safety hazard," "emergency evacuation," and "personal protective equipment," with a correct rate of over 90% in group tests.

Students should be able to proficiently master and use at least five sentence structures concerning workplace safety, such as "It is crucial to.. in order to prevent..." and "We should immediately take measures to address the safety hazard of..." In simulated dialogues, each group should use these sentence structures at least three times, with a grammar accuracy rate of over 95%.

In simulated work scenario dialogues, each student's oral expression fluency (measured by the absence of significant pauses, repetitions, or filler words) should reach over 80%. The dialogue content should revolve around identifying safety hazards, communicating about them, and proposing solutions. Each student should propose at least two specific improvement measures, expressing them clearly and logically.

At least 80% of the students should be able to identify and respect differences in safety communication across different cultural

backgrounds, demonstrating sensitivity to cross-cultural communication in simulated dialogues. Each student should be able to cite at least one example from cross-cultural communication tips and explain how it can be applied to safety communication in the workplace.

The cooperation (measured by clear division of labor, mutual support, and effective communication) among group members should reach over 90%. The solutions proposed by the groups should reflect innovative thinking, with at least one solution being original to the group and feasible in real work scenarios.

3.3 Teaching Procedures

The teacher first shows a short video or images of workplace safety accidents, such as accidents caused by safety negligence on a factory production line, and guides students to discuss the causes of the accidents and possible preventive measures. A work scenario in an Internet of Things enterprise is set up. Students are divided into groups to play different roles (such as production line workers, safety supervisors, and new employees) and face a specific safety hazard issue that needs to be communicated and solved in English. Each group needs to prepare a 3-5 minute dialogue demonstrating how they identify safety hazards, communicate about the issues, and propose improvement measures. The teacher provides a list of vocabulary and phrases related to safety, such as "safety hazard," "emergency evacuation," and "personal protective equipment," accompanied by example sentences. Play or read a short English text or dialogue about workplace safety regulations to help students familiarize themselves with professional vocabulary and expressions. Introduce cross-cultural communication tips, explaining differences and precautions in safety communication across different cultural backgrounds. Groups discuss the safety hazard issues and solutions within their groups. The teacher circulates to provide guidance, helping students correct grammar errors in their dialogues, enrich their expressions, and ensure that the dialogue content is both accurate and appropriate for the workplace context. The teacher encourages students to use newly learned vocabulary and sentence structures to enhance the richness and accuracy of their language.

After each group presents their dialogue, the teacher and classmates provide immediate

feedback, focusing on the fluency, accuracy, and logic of language expression, as well as the demonstration of cross-cultural communication abilities. Students self-assess their performance during the dialogue preparation and presentation, identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Students are encouraged to evaluate each other, providing constructive feedback on language use, teamwork, and innovative thinking. The teacher summarizes the highlights and areas for improvement in this teaching activity, emphasizing the importance of safety knowledge and the application value of oral English in the workplace. Students are encouraged to continue practicing oral English in their daily lives to enhance their cross-cultural communication abilities.

4. Suggestions for the Application of the Production-oriented Approach in Oral English Teaching in Five-Year Higher Vocational Education

Before the commencement of the course, teachers should clearly define the teaching objectives and design communicative situations that are relevant to students' actual lives, such as making friends, pursuing further education, and working. This approach aims to enhance students' learning interests and motivations. These situations should help students confront various challenges in life, thereby encouraging them to participate more actively in oral practice.

Teachers need to skillfully introduce tasks or questions to stimulate students' learning interests and motivations. This can be achieved by proposing specific and clear tasks, such as having students simulate a real-life dialogue scenario. During this stage, teachers should encourage students to attempt to produce preliminary outcomes, even if these outcomes may not be perfect.

Teachers should provide appropriate input materials that can facilitate students' output and align with their actual proficiency levels. Input materials may include language points, expressions, sentence structures, etc. Teachers should avoid the traditional "intensive reading" mode. Throughout this process, teachers should offer timely feedback and guidance to help students correct their mistakes and improve their oral expression abilities.

Assessment is an indispensable component of the POA. Teachers should adopt a variety of assessment methods, including immediate

assessment, concurrent assessment during learning, and delayed assessment^[9]. Immediate assessment helps students identify and rectify problems promptly during the learning process, while delayed assessment can be conducted after students complete the entire task to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of their learning outcomes. During the assessment process, teachers should focus on encouraging and affirming students' progress while also pointing out their existing problems and directions for improvement.

The output tasks should not mark the end of learning but rather the beginning of another phase. After completing the current tasks, teachers should promptly guide students to engage in extended and expanded learning^[10]. This can be achieved by providing new communicative situations, increasing the difficulty level, or introducing new language points. Such approaches help consolidate students' oral expression abilities and broaden their linguistic knowledge.

5. Conclusion

In summary, in the field of higher vocational English education, oral English teaching has always been a crucial link in enhancing students' comprehensive language proficiency. This paper focuses on the research of the POA in five-year higher vocational oral English teaching, conducting in-depth discussions and analyses. The POA emphasizes concepts such as 'learning-centeredness' and 'integration of learning and using,' demonstrating significant advantages in five-year higher vocational oral English teaching. From the perspective of teaching content, traditional oral English teaching often focuses on the mechanical repetition of textbook materials. In contrast, the POA encourages teachers to design teaching content centered around real-life communication scenarios and tasks. For instance, teachers may set up authentic situations like simulated business negotiations and tourism reception, enabling students to have something to talk about and practice with, thus making the teaching content more aligned with students' future career needs.

In terms of evaluation methods, the POA also brings about innovations. It discards the single evaluation mode that primarily relies on exam scores and adopts a diversified evaluation system. It not only pays attention to the accuracy of students' oral expressions but also emphasizes

their fluency, logicity, and ability to solve problems in real-life situations. Teachers evaluate students comprehensively through various forms such as classroom performance, group projects, and oral presentations, allowing students to promptly understand their strengths and weaknesses and make targeted improvements.

The reform of teaching methods is another important outcome brought about by the POA. Teachers no longer simply impart knowledge but become guides and organizers of students' learning. In the classroom, teachers first present clear output tasks, then guide students in input learning, and finally assess the learning outcomes through output activities. This "motivating - enabling - assessing" teaching process fully mobilizes students' learning enthusiasm and initiative, cultivating their autonomous learning abilities.

These reform measures make teaching more in line with students' actual needs, enabling them to continuously improve their practical language application abilities through practice. It is hoped that the research findings of this paper can provide valuable references for higher vocational oral English teaching. Educators can draw inspiration from them, continuously explore and innovate teaching methods, promote the development of higher vocational oral English teaching, and cultivate more high-quality technical and skilled talents with good oral English proficiency for society.

References

- [1] Ellis, R. Task-based Language Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ellis, R. The Production-Oriented Approach: Moving Forward. Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2023, 40(4), 454.
- [2] Huang, Y. Investigation on the effectiveness of "production-oriented approach" in senior high school English writing expression strategies. Conference on Education, Language and Inter-cultural Communication. 2020, 59(3): 624.
- [3] Sun, S.-G. Optimizing teacher-student collaborative assessment in the production-oriented approach: a dialectical research. Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics. 2020, 61: 43(03), 305-322.
- [4] Lei Yuanjie, Exploration on the Teaching Design of Vocational College English Writing Based on the Production-Oriented Approach. Science & Technology Vision. 2020 (10):

- 236.
- [5] Wu Wenzhong, Teaching Design of Elementary Chinese Spoken Language Based on the Production-Oriented Approach. Master's thesis, Hebei Normal University.2019: 22.
- [6] Sun Na, An Exploratory Study on the Application of the Production-Oriented Approach in Junior High School English Listening and Speaking Teaching. Overseas English. 2024(01): 25.
- [7] Wen, Qiufang. Constructing the Theoretical System of the Production-Oriented Approach. Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 2015, 47(4): 547-640.
- [8] Wen, Qiufang. The Chinese Characteristics of the Production-Oriented Approach. Modern Foreign Languages, 2017(3): 348-358.
- [9] Wen, Qiufang. "Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment": A New Evaluation Form Created by the "Production-Oriented Approach". Foreign Languages in China, 2016(05): 37-43.
- [10]Wen, Qiufang. The "Production-Oriented Approach" and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Chinese Teaching in the World, 2018, 32(3): 387-398.