



A Study on the Application Methods of College English Listening and Speaking Textbooks Based on the Production-Oriented Approach

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Abstract

The introduction of “Production-Oriented Approach”(POA) has charted a new direction for the reform of college English teaching. Under the guidance of this theory, it is necessary to explore the innovative methods to use the textbooks in college English listening and speaking courses. When using the series of textbooks *iEnglish: Viewing, Listening and Speaking* that are compiled based on POA, teachers first set clear output goals. Grounded in “Output-Driven Hypothesis”, “Input-Enabled Hypothesis”, and “Selective Learning Hypothesis”, they follow the teaching process of “Motivating—Enabling—Assessing” to strategically select, adapt, modify, and supplement the content of the textbooks. This approach effectively avoids the pitfalls of over-reliance on textbooks, improves the quality of students’ linguistic output, and ultimately realizes the educational philosophies of “Learner-Centered Principle”, “Learning-Using Integrated Principle”, and “Whole-Person Education Principle”.

Key words: Production-oriented approach; College English listening and speaking; The application methods of textbooks; *iEnglish: Viewing, Listening and speaking*

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1. INTRODUCTION

At present, college English teaching has undergone a series of paradigmatic reforms, which include the “student-centered” teaching model based on constructivism, the “flipped- classroom” model advocating self-learning outside the classroom and assessing inside the classroom, the “blended teaching” model combining online learning with offline teaching, and the “smart teaching” model based on intelligent devices. These reforms have fundamentally transformed the traditional “teacher-centered” indoctrination approach, improved students’ language abilities, and enhanced the effectiveness of teaching. However, these reforms still leave a critical issue unresolved in current college English education, that is, the separation between learning and application. Although students acquire language knowledge and skills, they are unable to apply them flexibly in real life, let alone effectively participate in authentic communicative activities or solve practical problems. In response to this phenomenon, Professor Wen Qiufang from Beijing Foreign Studies University, together with numerous experts and scholars, has conducted in-depth theoretical research and extensive practical exploration, ultimately proposing the “Production-Oriented Approach” (POA). This approach has exerted profound impact on the further reform and optimization of college English teaching models. Consequently, the methods of using college English textbooks also requires corresponding improvements aligned with POA.

2. THE SPECIFIC CONTENT OF “PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH”

The “Production-Oriented Approach” (POA) is a theoretical system first proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang, a renowned expert in Chinese foreign language education, in the journal *Foreign Language Teaching and*

Research in 2015. It primarily addresses the widespread issues of “separation of learning and application” and “low efficiency” in foreign language education in most Chinese universities and colleges. Therefore, POA exhibits distinct Chinese characteristics while also fully integrating the essence of both traditional Chinese educational theories and Western pedagogical principles.

To be exact, POA consists of three major aspects: “Teaching Philosophy”, “Teaching Hypotheses”, and “Teaching Procedures”. Among them, “Teaching Philosophy” serves as the guiding principle, “Teaching Hypotheses” provide the theoretical foundation, and “Teaching Procedures” constitute the implementation methodology. In each of the three aspects, POA has put forward specific propositions to ensure systematic and effective implementation.

2.1 Teaching Philosophy

In the aspect of “Teaching Philosophy”, POA proposes the “Learner-Centered Principle”, which means that all teaching activities are designed to promote study efficiency. This requires teachers to carefully consider and research how to make more effective use of teaching materials and select appropriate contents within limited teaching time. Moreover, POA advocates the “Learning-Using Integrated Principle,” where “learning” corresponds to input-oriented learning, mainly including reading and listening, while “using” refers to “output”, which encompasses speaking, writing, and translating. Specifically, it promotes the idea of learning and using simultaneously, which means using in the process of learning, learning in the process of using, and integrating learning and using as one. In other words, POA encourages a close integration of input-oriented learning and output-oriented production, with an organic linkage between the two and no significant temporal gap. Regarding the application of textbooks, POA clearly points out the drawbacks of being “textbook-centered”, and emphasizes how to effectively use textbooks to achieve ideal teaching outcomes.

On the other hand, Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education has proposed that foreign language courses should not only achieve the instrumental objectives of enhancing students’ comprehensive English proficiency, but also fulfill the humanistic goals of higher education, such as cultivating students’ critical thinking skills, autonomous learning abilities, and comprehensive cultural literacy. In response to these requirements, POA has put forward the “Whole-Person Education Principle”, which suggests that college English teaching should integrate both instrumental and humanistic aspects. It should simultaneously improve students’ humanistic quality while developing their language skills. To achieve this goal, teachers need to carefully select input materials, skillfully design teaching activities, and thoughtfully arrange output tasks.

2.2 Teaching Hypothesis

“Teaching Hypotheses” of POA mainly consist of three elements: “Output-Driven Hypothesis”, “Input-Enabled Hypothesis”, and “Selective Learning Hypothesis”. Specifically, “Output-Driven Hypothesis” refers to the idea that, at the initial stage of teaching, teachers need to design targeted output tasks based on the overall teaching objectives and sub-goals, which should help students clarify their learning objectives and the communicative value of their learning. It should also enable them to recognize their deficiencies in language ability, thereby generating an internal motivation to learn and actively engaging in subsequent learning activities.

“Input-Enabled Hypothesis” refers to the idea that teachers need to provide input materials to facilitate students’ output. This requires teachers to carefully observe and document the major problems that students have in the previous phase. According to the deficiencies, teachers need to supplement corresponding input materials. In this way, teachers can fulfill their role as experts to effectively help students expand their existing knowledge and language systems so that students’ output ability can be elevated to a new level.

“Selective Learning Hypothesis” advocates purposefully selecting input materials that best align with productive needs and real-life communication according to the needs of output. At the same time, teachers should guide students to engage themselves into the in-depth processing, practice, and memorization of these selected materials so that the teaching efficiency can be improved and the quality of output can be optimized.

2.3 Teaching Procedures

The teaching process proposed by POA is divided into three stages: Motivating—Enabling—Assessing. In these three stages, teachers play mediating roles as guides, designers, and scaffolds.

In the “Motivating” stage, teachers need to present students with challenging communicative situations that they may encounter in the future, helping them recognize the value of production and the challenges they will face. The design of communicative situations goes beyond merely providing a context for language use. Instead, it should include four elements: topic (what to produce), purpose (why to produce), identity (who produces and for whom), and context (where production occurs). If the elements of identity and context are inadequately addressed when teachers design the tasks, students will fail to clarify their roles or understand the situational demands. Consequently, the potential communicative value of the task will not be fully explored in the real practice. This not only diminishes the significance of the “Motivating” stage but also misleads students to develop the erroneous habit of practicing language for its own sake. Only in authentic communicative situations, where students actively attempt to produce language

and feel the pressure as well as motivation to learn, can teachers clearly explain the teaching objectives, including communicative and linguistic goals, to help students develop a positive motivation to learn.

The “Enabling” stage consists of three phases: 1) the teacher describes the production task; 2) students engage in selective learning with teacher’s guidance; 3) students produce output with teacher’s guidance. In these phases, on the one hand, teachers provide input materials, focusing on their demonstrative role in content, linguistic form, and discourse structure to help students accumulate relevant language resources. On the other hand, students selectively learn and practice production based on their learning outcomes. Throughout this process, teachers must fully play the role of “scaffolds”, providing necessary linguistic materials and knowledge based on students’ initial outputs, and offering timely guidance and appropriate assistance. As students progress, teachers should consciously reduce the scaffolding function gradually, empowering students to master the methods of completing tasks independently on the basis of their prior learning and practice. Meanwhile, teachers need to leverage their linguistic expertise to provide core language expressions, thereby elevating students’ production quality.

The “Assessing” stage includes both immediate and delayed assessment. The former refers to the real-time feedback and assessment made by teachers during the process of learning and practice. Teachers need to adjust the teaching pace and progress in a timely manner, identifying students’ problems and difficulties, and offering corresponding guidance and assistance. The latter refers to the teachers’ overall assessment of students’ performance after their out-of-class practice, as well as the self-assessment and peer-assessment among students organized by teachers. This collaborative assessment approach between teachers and students effectively helps teachers understand students’ overall learning outcomes and enables students to further review the content they have learned.

3. THE USE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING TEXTBOOKS

3.1 Existing Problems

In fact, textbooks serve as a fundamental medium for any course. Regardless of the subject, school education largely relies on textbooks. However, current college English listening and speaking instruction is almost entirely based on textbooks. Specifically, teachers typically follow the routine:

- Play the listening materials in the order arranged by the textbook.

- Analyze the main contents of the materials while explaining relevant listening skills and strategies.

- Focus on key vocabulary, phrases, and sentence patterns to help students accumulate linguistic resources and master language skills.

During the initial teaching stages, teachers design warm-up activities based on each unit in the textbook, supplement background knowledge, and clarify the main contents. However, the majority of the contents still revolve around the existing knowledge in textbooks. In the classroom, even though there is teacher-students or students-students interaction, it often takes the form of question-and-answer or answer-checking. Obviously, this textbook-centered approach aligns closely with traditional teaching methods, where teachers simply prioritize delivering the textbook contents over cultivating students’ comprehensive English application abilities. As a result, students’ listening and speaking abilities are only sufficient for dealing with the textbook-specific exercises and thematic discussions, while lacking opportunities for extension or real-world application. It may become more serious problem when class hours are continuously being reduced in recent years. In this case, teaching becomes further restricted to textbook, which limits students’ accumulation of knowledge to textbook-related contents, without being able to produce effectively based on real-life situations.

As Professor Wen Qiufang has pointed out, even during the vigorous phase of college English teaching reform, there is still an extreme approach among teachers in higher education institutions regarding the use of teaching materials—over-reliance on textbooks. In other words, teaching all the contents in the printed textbooks without selection or adaptation, strictly following the prescribed sequence. However, in reality, students’ English proficiency levels vary significantly, and there are also great differences in the talent cultivation goals in different universities. Therefore, teachers must select, adjust, modify, and supplement the contents of textbooks according to the different learning conditions of students, the training objectives and the prescribed teaching hours.

To be exact, “selecting” refers to choosing specific materials from textbooks in accordance with the teaching objectives; “adjusting” means reorganizing the materials based on actual needs; “modifying” involves appropriately altering the difficulty level of the materials, such as transforming easier multiple-choice questions into more challenging dictation exercises; “supplementing” entails adding new relevant materials centered on the themes of textbooks. Only by using the textbooks flexibly, can teachers break free from excessive textbook

dependency, truly promote students' willingness to produce language output, and improve the quality of their production.

3.2 Introduction of the Textbooks

POA (Production-Oriented Approach) offers innovative perspective for college English teaching and sets higher requirements for the use of textbooks. Guided by the specific principles of POA, many renowned experts and teachers, represented by Professor Wang Shouren, Professor Wen Qiufang, and Professor He Lianzhen, compiled the series of textbooks *iEnglish: Viewing, Listening and Speaking* in 2018, which have been widely used in college English teaching. Published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP), this series prioritizes enhancing students' practical English competencies while cultivating their critical thinking and intercultural communication skills. It fully embodies pedagogical philosophies including "Learner-Centered Principle", "Learning-Using Integrated Principle" and "Whole-Person Education Principle", as well as the foreign language teaching hypotheses of "Output-Driven Hypothesis", "Input-Enabled Hypothesis" and "Selective Learning Hypothesis". The textbooks also adopt a teaching process of "Motivating—Enabling—Assessing", aiming to develop students' ability to solve problems in English.

As for the specific contents of the textbooks, each unit comprises six components: iPrepare, iExplore 1: Listening and Speaking, iExplore 2: Viewing and Speaking, iPractice: Pronunciation, iProduce: Unit project, and Further Listening. It is evident that this series of textbooks provide abundant content and diverse materials, fundamentally ensuring that there is substance in teaching. Simultaneously, there are corresponding smart teaching platform "Unipus", which has developed mobile digital courses and innovative MOOC platform, which are deeply integrated with the textbooks. The contents on the platform are consistent with those in the textbooks, providing technical support for students' online autonomous learning.

It can be said that the series of textbooks *iEnglish: Viewing, Listening and Speaking*, rooted in practical English teaching and students' learning interests, have designed communicative situations that closely align with real-life contexts and emphasize practicality. By selecting input materials with appropriate difficulty and length, coupled with flexible and diverse exercise formats, this series stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning and improves their language application abilities through authentic situations and innovative designs. On the other hand, the themes of the textbooks are rich and varied, covering not only campus life and leisure entertainment

but also social development, history and culture. The multifaceted and diverse cultural perspectives help to cultivate students' correct values and develop their critical thinking abilities.

3.3 Application Methods

Since 2020, the university where the author works has comprehensively updated the textbooks for the course College English Listening and Speaking, adopting the series of textbooks *iEnglish: Viewing, Listening and Speaking*. As previously mentioned, the textbooks provide abundant resources in viewing, listening, and speaking respectively for each unit along with a variety of exercises. However, teachers need to adjust the difficulty levels, select contents, and supplement or expand the materials provided in the textbooks according to the specific learning conditions and talent cultivation goals of the university. This ensures that the varying needs of students at different proficiency levels can be met, their individual differences as well as personalization can be respected, and more authentic contextual details can be provided for students. At the same time, regarding the difficulties students face in language production, teachers should not rigidly adhere to completing the textbook contents alone. Instead, they should focus on re-integrating textbooks with supplementary resources, emphasizing the gradual progression of teaching contents. By acting as a "scaffolding", teachers ensure that the contents progress from simple to complex, following the step-by-step cognitive hierarchy.

Below is a specific illustration of the application method of textbook based on POA, taking Unit 7 in the first semester of the course College English Listening and Speaking as an example. The theme of this unit is *Tech, a Blessing or a Curse?* The teaching duration is four class hours. In accordance with the principles of POA, the textbook contents are carefully selected, concentrating on two sections: iExplore 1 and Further Listening. The former includes a passage: *Technologies Turning Science Fiction into Reality*, a conversation: *Is AI a Threat to us?* and two news reports; the latter consists of one news report, one conversation, and one passage. To reflect the characteristics of POA, the following teaching objectives are set for this unit:

Language Objectives: Master 19 common words related to the theme of this unit, such as "submarine", "helicopter", etc.; Proficiently use words, phrases, and sentence patterns to express agreement and disagreement, such as advocate, opponent, etc.

Communicative Objectives: Engage in dialectical discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of technical advancement; Predict and envision the future development of technology; Articulate and justify personal viewpoints clearly.

To achieve these objectives, the application of the textbooks follows the teaching process of POA, that

is, “Motivating—Enabling—Assessing”. Meanwhile, the teaching materials are selected, adjusted, modified, and supplemented on the basis of “Output-Driven Hypothesis”, “Input-Enabled Hypothesis”, and “Selective Learning Hypothesis” to achieve the best teaching effect. Among them, “Output-Driven Hypothesis” aims to enhance students’ motivation to produce language, while “Input-Enabled Hypothesis” and “Selective Learning Hypothesis” pave the way for output, enabling students to apply what they have learned in a timely manner. The specific application of teaching materials in each process is as follows:

Motivating: As the first step in the teaching process, “Motivating” aims to stimulate students’ intrinsic motivation by primarily assigning productive tasks related to the theme, helping students to activate their existing knowledge, identify existing problems, and spark curiosity for further learning. For the study of this unit, teachers first design listening and speaking tasks based on the theme of this unit, and create authentic scenarios with potential communicative value to guide students in making reflection, discover the deficiencies, and arouse their interest in learning. The specific arrangement is as follows:

In listening aspect: Before the class, students are required to complete the listening exercises in the parts of iExplore 1 and Further Listening independently through “Unipus” platform, focusing on accumulating basic vocabulary or sentence patterns related to technology and be familiar with the expressions for agreement and disagreement. During the whole process, students’ performance is synchronized and tracked, which means students’ online learning performance is automatically recorded on the platform, enabling teachers to promptly understand the difficulties that students encounter and the common problems. Some exercises are relatively difficult. For example, in the first passage of iExplore 1, students made many mistakes, especially with more specialized vocabulary such as “submarine” and “helicopter”. Meanwhile, by completing these tasks, students identify their weaknesses in listening comprehension, including the inability to effectively capture the key words, spelling errors, and the lack of proficiency in listening strategies, which in turn motivates them to pursue further learning.

In speaking part: Teachers design scenarios with potential communicative value and challenges based on the themes of this unit. For example, students are required to prepare a dialogue in groups for the given scenario: “When international students come to your university, you, as a representative of the university, need to introduce how advanced technologies are applied in your daily life and study, and how they impact your study and life. Meanwhile, the international students, in turn, are expected to ask questions and appropriately express concerns or doubts.” During the preparation of the dialogue, students confront limitations, such as

inadequate vocabulary, the lack of fluency in expression, and insufficient examples, which further promotes their subsequent learning. These challenges naturally drive them to seek targeted improvements in subsequent learning phases. Through role-playing and guided practice, students gradually internalize topic-specific terminology (e.g., AI-driven systems, digital learning platforms) and refine their ability to articulate complex ideas, fostering both fluency and critical thinking.

Enabling: Being the core component of POA, enabling is an essential part in realizing the principle of “learning through application and applying through learning”. At this phase, the contents of the textbook no longer serve as the center of teaching and learning, but rather necessary facilitative materials, while the primary purpose of students’ learning is not to comprehend the language materials, but to apply it in practice and accomplish the productive tasks. To address the problems identified by students in the “Motivating” stage, teachers need to adapt and supplement the teaching contents accordingly in classroom teaching.

In the listening part: Based on the analysis of students’ online learning performance, teachers should conduct in-depth explanation and summarize the materials where students made more mistakes. For example, to help students solve the problems in the “Motivating” stage and help them master the key vocabulary of this unit proficiently, the first passage in the iExplore section, which was originally in the form of multiple-choice questions, can be changed into a dictation cloze exercise. This kind of adjustment not only guides students to comprehend the core idea of the text more accurately but also helps them build a more solid foundation in vocabulary. Students can comprehensively grasp the usage of vocabulary from various aspects, such as spelling, meaning, and collocations, thus accumulating essential linguistic resources for subsequent production.

In the speaking part: Many students, when preparing for conversations, claim that they have a lot of ideas to express but they lack the ability to articulate themselves fluently in English. They either fail to recall the right vocabulary or resort to directly translating Chinese linguistic patterns into English, which consequently leads to less-than-satisfactory completion of their speaking assignments. In response to this phenomenon, teachers first introduce supplementary the video material *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Technology*, focusing on explaining key vocabulary and phrases such as “comfort/comfortable”, “virtual class”, “e-learning”, “implementation”, “make use of”, “result in”, “obesity/obese”, “pollute/pollution”, etc. Additionally, teachers also introduce the sentence patterns, including “Technology has, beyond doubt, eased the life of human beings. It has proved to be a great boon in the development process of culture and society.” and “However, too much of anything is bad. Technology should be used with

due care and caution only for the purposes that are of benefit to humanity.” Through this targeted instruction, students will strengthen their lexical retrieval abilities, internalize English discourse patterns, and systematically build foundational language resources to enhance oral expression.

On the basis of the full application of listening and speaking materials, students are organized to continue engaging in productive activities. They are divided into groups to discuss the problem “How does science and technology change our life?” Groups are required to explore the topic from both positive and negative aspects and flexibly use the expressions learned in the input-oriented activities. Subsequently, students are guided to engage in selective learning according to the productive tasks so that the likelihood of practical application of the language knowledge they have learned can be enhanced. To further consolidate students’ language proficiency and promote their critical thinking skills, teachers supplement the instruction with two video resources: *How will artificial intelligence change your world for better or worse?* and the TED Talk *How to get empowered, not overpowered, by AI?* Depending on their English proficiency, students choose to take notes on important expressions and language structures from the videos and then apply them in the classroom discussion on the topics “Is science and technology an angel or a monster?” and “How shall we treat the rapid development of AI?” After class, students are asked to summarize and elaborate on the classroom discussion in a 1-2-minute audio recording, which should be uploaded to an online platform for self-assessment and peer review. Meanwhile, teachers provide comprehensive feedback on students’ oral presentations, offering timely guidance to help students continuously improve the quality of their language production.

Assessing: During the processes of “Driving” and “Enabling”, teachers conduct real-time assessments while guiding students to complete delayed assessment. In the real-time assessment, teachers summarize the common issues in students’ oral expressions and explain the correct methods. Additionally, teachers select representative exemplary tasks, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and guide students to engage in imitation practice. For the delayed assessment, teachers develop evaluation criteria and design a scoring sheet before class, providing corresponding methodological guidance for students’ self-assessment and peer review. After the activity is completed, the scoring sheets are distributed, and students are required to conduct peer evaluations within their groups and assess their own performance. The combination of these two types of assessment achieves the collaborative assessment between teachers and students. And the assessment focuses primarily on three aspects: content, language and structure. The specific criteria can be seen in the Table 1.

Table 1
Assessment Criteria for Oral Performance

Assessment Content	Specific Criteria
Content	Whether there are innovative viewpoints and whether they are closely related to the topic.
Language	Whether the target vocabulary, phrases, and sentence patterns have been used, and whether there are any grammatical errors.
Structure	Whether there is a clear logic, distinct layers, and a complete structure.

Through the assessment, it can be found that in the study of this unit, students can significantly expand their mastery of specialized vocabulary related to technology, and they are also able to more skillfully use English sentence patterns to express agreement or disagreement. Meanwhile, in the self-assessment activities, students need to actively and continuously reflect on their own shortcomings and summarize excellent experiences, which can further promote their self-directed knowledge accumulation and improvement. Peer assessment, on the other hand, enables students to learn from each other’s strengths and compensate for their weaknesses through constructive feedback in an atmosphere of collaborative effort and mutual appreciation.

4. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of the “Production-Oriented Approach” (POA), college English listening and speaking teaching requires more flexible application of textbooks. After a semester of teaching practice, it has been demonstrated that in the teaching process of “Driving—Enabling—Assessing”, based on the theoretical framework of POA, teachers can effectively enhance students’ enthusiasm for participating in listening and speaking activities through strategically selecting, appropriately adjusting and modifying, and reasonably expanding and supplementing the contents of textbooks. This approach has, in turn, not only improved students’ language proficiency, elevated their comprehensive competencies, but also further strengthened their ability to produce language in real communicative situations.

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