

On the Exploration of the Feasibility of Applying Production Oriented Approach into the Teaching Practice of English Rhetorical Devices

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Abstract

Based on the analysis of status quo in teaching practice of English rhetorical devices, this paper, guided by the methodology of Production Oriented Approach, reconstructs a new teaching mode of English rhetorical devices and generalizes a plausible teaching plan so as to optimize the teaching structure, improve students' abilities of appreciation and output of rhetorical devices, thus cultivating comprehensive talents who can meet the requirements of the trend of times.

Key words: Production oriented approach; English rhetorical device; Teaching practice

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1. PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

POA (Production-Oriented Approach) is an English-teaching methodology firstly put forward by Wen Qiufang in 2007. After its 5th edition, the theory is mature enough to equip with the international perspective as well as the local feature.

POA covers three interrelated teaching sections: teaching principles, teaching hypotheses and teaching procedures. Teaching principles are the theoretical basis, which advocates the learning-centered theory, adheres to the guideline of input-output integration, cultural exchange as well as key competencies. Among them, the input-output integration highlights the design of teaching process based on output; education emphasized on key competencies reflects the social background of cultivating comprehensive talents in accordance with the development needs of the Times.

Teaching hypotheses is comprised of four parts, output-driven, input-enabled, selective learning and assessment being learning. The four hypotheses serve as linkage between teaching principles and teaching procedures, promoting the formulation and implementation of teaching process.

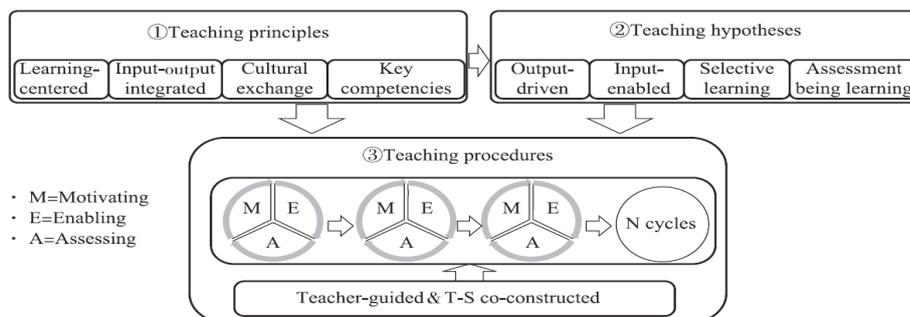


Figure 1
Wholistic POA system (Wen, 2018b)

Teaching procedures include three aspects: motivating, enabling, and assessing. Teachers, as intermediaries, participate in this process, offering encouragement and guidance and giving full play to the role of students. Below is the wholistic POA system.

So far, academic researches on POA have been widely applied into college curriculums, such as Oral English, Academic Writing, College English through Watching Listening Speaking, Second Language Acquisition, Chinese as A Foreign Language, and so on. Such courses provide practical experience and reference for the further consolidation and development of the theory POA. This paper analyses the teaching practice of rhetorical devices among English majors, points out several existing problems in the education of figures of speech, reconstructs a new teaching mode based on the methodology of POA so as to improve students' ability on rhetoric appreciation and aesthetic value in literature, motivate students to output rhetorical devices on a larger scale as well as enhance their comprehensive ability. Subsequently, input-output integration is achieved and the diversified demands of society development is met.

2. THE STATUS QUO OF RHETORIC TEACHING

According to American linguistic Brooks and Warren, rhetoric is "the art of using language effectively" (Brooks and Warren, p.5). As an independent discipline, rhetoric is not only subjected to the level of words, but also covers the levels of vocabulary, sentence, discourse, phonology etc. Nonetheless, several drawbacks exist in the teaching practice of rhetorical devices, hampering the general development of students' rhetoric appreciation ability and failing to reach its teaching objectives.

2.1 Marginalized Discipline

Despite the fact that the teaching syllabus in universities has set the improvement of students' rhetorical appreciation ability as the primary teaching objective, rhetoric is not yet a specific curriculum in university. Instead, rhetoric exists as a key point in several basic course among English majors. For instance, rhetoric in diction has been enlisted in the teaching material, *Handbook of Writing* edited by Ding Wangdao, in the second chapter; rhetoric in sentence level and passage level has been enlisted in the teaching materials, *An Integrated English Course* and *Advanced English*, in the unit of appreciation of rhetorical devices; rhetoric in phonetic level has been enlisted in the teaching materials of American and English literature in terms of poetry appreciation.

As a result, rhetoric has become a marginalized and neglected subject for English majors in colleges and universities because of improper curriculum setting,

insufficient teaching hours. Just like Mr. Chen Wangdao points out, "rhetoric is between language and literature, but a marginalized subject closely tied with other disciplines" (Chen, p.119).

2.2 Unchanged Teaching Method

In the setting of rhetorical teaching objectives, teachers only require students learn to differentiate various rhetorical devices, thus remaining in the primary stage of learning based on task-fulfilling. In this way, the exam-oriented teaching objective deviates from the context of the text and lacks in-depth discussion and analysis of rhetorical discourse, which directly leads to the weakness of students' rhetorical ability.

During the teaching process, teachers still adopt the traditional teaching mode to inculcate rhetorical methods to students, following the three conventional steps of concept explanation, example sentence analysis and exercises. They fail to play an active leading role and fully mobilize students' learning enthusiasm, which also results in students' resistance and weariness to learn rhetoric.

2.3 Insufficient Ability to Put Rhetorical Devices Into Use

Due to the academic pressure of English majors, most of them spare no effort in the preparation of the TEM-4 and TEM-8 exams, and excessively pursue the technical trainings of vocabulary, listening, writing and reading skills, ignoring the internal needs of improving the ability of literary appreciation. This also results in the insufficiency of rhetorical sensitivity, failing to identify the aesthetic beauty behind rhetoric. Worse still, some students directly equate rhetoric with obscurity and completely lose the motivation to learn rhetoric.

Rhetorical ability refers to the ability to put rhetoric into use. In terms of the writing level of English majors, they can meet the basic requirements of clear expression, distinct theme, diversified sentence patterns and appropriate choice of words, but few of them are capable of using rhetoric in writing practice. In short, students lack the ability to output rhetorical devices in writing as well as in speech, so they can hardly optimize language expression to the full extent.

3. TEACHING PRACTICE ABOUT ENGLISH RHETORICAL DEVICES BASED ON POA

According to the teaching hypothesis of POA, output-driven mode is more effective in stimulating students' learning motivation and enthusiasm than input-driven mode and can thus achieving better learning results. Hence, this teaching design aims at innovating the teaching practice of rhetoric for English majors,

organically combining the output-oriented method with rhetorical teaching, and realizing the teaching concept of integrating learning with use. Moreover, in view of the existing problems of rhetoric teaching in colleges and universities, this teaching design takes advantage of online and offline platforms, sets up the dual track of rhetoric applied in oral English and English writing so as to enhance students' enthusiasm for learning rhetoric, broaden the application range of rhetoric, and promote the comprehensive ability to use rhetoric.

3.1 Online Motivation-Driven Mode

As the primary stage of POA, motivation plays an essential role in clarifying the teaching objectives and output tasks as well as stimulating students. What is worth noting is that the design of motivation should strike a good balance between teaching objectives and output tasks. On the one hand, teachers should design output scenarios based on the teaching objectives. On the other hand, the actual difficulty of teaching output should well match the language level of students to maximize their enthusiasm.

On top of it, teacher can design the teaching practice through releasing several pre-class learning videos through online platforms, like MOOC, SPOC, Superstar Learning Software (also known as Xue Xitong, a Chinese online software for E-learning). These videos are about 5- 10 minutes, which are closely linked with rhetorical devices, such as the appreciation of rhetorical devices based on English poems, famous speeches etc. After the videos, 3 to 5 questions should be raised. For instance, what type of figures of speech are used in the video? Why are they used? What are the benefits of them? By means of online motivation and question-based driving mode, students' interest in rhetoric can be mobilized. Accordingly, they have a preliminary understanding about the objectives of the output tasks and a general cognition about the basic material, such as the discourse materials, rhetorical scope, context. Teachers should give full play to their students, and offer guidance on the clarification the rhetorical teaching objectives, the orientation of output tasks in order to lay a solid foundation for the teaching procedure of "Enabling"

3.2 Online and Offline Enabling

Enabling is an indispensable part of teaching design. Based on the first phase of motivation where the interests of students are triggered, teacher can supply new teaching materials in a wider scale to enable students to scaffold and instruct them to specify the material into separated tasks. In order to optimize the setting of the teaching design, teacher can divide the output process into three sub-steps, ranging from relatively easy one to the hard one.

The first step is used to pinpoint the output task. In other words, Improving the ability of employing

figure of speech among students. With the help of pre-learning online video and pre-class questions, the teacher elaborated the target of rhetoric teaching in depth and further illustrated the output task.

The second step is to supply material around the output task. In a real teaching practice, various materials, such as, pictures, audios, can be made fully use of to broaden the rhetoric cognition of students and encourage them to discover the beauty of rhetorical devices.

In the last step, students are required to identify several confusing figures of speech. There exist some confusing key points in rhetorical devices, such as simile and metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. Considering that, students should be provided with more examples of text materials for distinction and identification. Moreover, students should be included in group discussion to summarize the difference in a group.

At this time, the teacher, as a bystander, supervises and inspects the students' output exercises, and leads the students to consciously discover and identify English rhetorical devices in a correct way.

3.3 In-Class Output and After-Class Output

As the core of POA, output is crucial in achieving the teaching objectives and assessing students' levels. The output of this teaching practice relates to two dimensions, viz. in-class output and after-class output.

In terms of in-class output, teacher can encourage students to participate in curriculum activities based on outputting rhetorical devices. On the one hand, each student is organized to imitate, or write sentences with different rhetorical features on a sheet of white paper according to the picture materials presented in the teaching process. On the other hand, the white papers written by the students are collected by the teacher. Through in-class interaction, students are provoked to pick one paper and guess the rhetorical device embodied in the sentence. In this way, students' ability to identify rhetorical device are consolidated.

In addition, for some well-written sentence in paper, teacher sets an oral context and encourages students to make a second creation which means an impromptu oral English speech within one minute. Thus, students' desire for rhetorical output is further stimulated, and students' diversified expression of rhetorical devices in spoken language is promoted. In this perspective, teacher takes a step back and remains in the background, thus pushing the students in the foreground to give full play to what they have learnt, thought, written and spoken in class. Furthermore, as a supervisor, teacher should answer the questions from the students appropriately, check and correct their mistakes in output exercises, adjust the teaching pace in a macro level.

In terms of after-class outputting, optional homework, either shooting a dialogue -based role-play video containing at least 3 different rhetorical devices within 1

minute or submitting a 100 - word description containing at least 3 different rhetorical devices, can be assigned to students through the online platform to enrich the application of rhetorical devices.

3.4 Two-Dimensional Assessments

The assessments in POA are classified as instant assessment and delayed assessment. Instant assessment refers to the “ongoing diagnostic assessment” (Wen, 11) which is given by the teacher instantaneously during the process of learning. To some extent, the instant assessment, also known as the immediate evaluation, can be regarded as the teacher’s evaluation of the output in the classroom where teacher can effectively exploit the time in class, put forward clear requirements for students, give timely feedback, and promote the teaching progress. Following this rule, teacher can observe the groups in class and give simultaneous feedback to students during the teaching process.

The delayed assessment is directional to students’ after-class output performance “since it takes place during the next period of class”, “be it a speaking, writing translating, or interpreting product” (Wen, 16a). In this evaluation system, the homework submitted by students are used as the basis for formative evaluation. In order to achieve the multi-dimensional evaluation, teacher can present the output results of students in the form of video or written script in next class, and the students will evaluate each other, organizing and summarizing a more comprehensive opinions or evaluation methods to achieve the organic combination of teacher’s evaluation and students’ mutual evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the teaching practice of online motivating, offline enabling, double output, in-class output and after-class output and two-dimensional assessment, this paper explores the new teaching mode of English rhetorical devices. In a narrow sense, it optimizes the teaching procedures, enhances the teaching efficiency, and fully mobilizes the student’s learning interest; In a broader sense, it realized the teaching objective of integrating learning into application. Subsequently, students’ capability of putting rhetorical devices into use can be drastically improved and their comprehensive literary talent can be enhanced.

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