

Application of Production-Oriented Approach in English Teaching

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Supported by the Education and Teaching Reform Project of Jingdezhen Ceramic University, NO: TDJG-19-Y51.

Received 1 July 2021; accepted 19 August 2021
Published online 26 September 2021

Abstract

Professor Wen Qiufang's theory of Production-Oriented Approach asks the foreign language teacher to begin his teaching with the production task. After the accomplishment of the production task, the students can realize their deficiency in language acquisition, and with the teacher's guidance of language input and evaluation process, the students are able to enhance their ability of using the language and thus can give birth to a better language production.

Key words: Production-oriented approach; Language acquisition; Teaching

Wang, L., & Sun, J. Y. (2021). Application of Production-Oriented Approach in English Teaching. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 21(1), 6-10. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/12288>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12288>

1. INTRODUCTION

As a natural rule of learning, the teacher must impart knowledge to the students; therefore, input is the beginning of learning, so is language acquisition (Wang, 2010). Of course, knowledge input is the ground of knowledge output, but many English teachers have paid too much efforts to language input, and have neglected language output for so long. As a result, the students can only memorize some input information, but cannot use the information in real situations. This teacher-oriented

teaching mode has made many students inadequate in especially writing, translating, and speaking. In order to cultivate students' capability of language application, the teacher ought to adopt appropriate means to enhance their ability of language output, and establish an output-oriented teaching mode.

2. THEORIES OF LANGUAGE INPUT AND OUTPUT

2.1 Crashen's Theory of "Input Hypothesis"

In 1980s, American linguist Crashen put forward the theory of "Input Hypothesis". In order to acquire a second-language, he thinks, in the first place, comprehensible linguistic symbols and information must put into the learner. If the learner aims to enhance his language level, the comprehensible input must be a little more difficult for him; only in this means can the learner make progress in language acquisition. If the linguistic symbols and information put into the learner are not comprehensible to him, the language acquisition practice will not have satisfactory results (Crashen, 1985). Crashen's linguistic input hypothesis has become an important concept in second-language acquisition, yet he does not emphasize too much on language output, as he thinks that language output is the natural result of input.

2.2 Swain's Theory of "Output Hypothesis"

Canadian linguist Swain put forward the theory of "Output Hypothesis" in 1985. Her theory is based on "Immersion Teaching Program". As a professor of Toronto University, she has accumulated much experience in teaching, and she has found that many students for second-language acquisition are deficient in writing and translating. The main reason is that those students have few opportunities to put the language into practice, that is to say, the students are lack of language output (Swain, 1985). If a foreign language learner aims to grasp the language indeed, he

must do a lot of output concerning the expression and practice of the language (Wang, 2013).

On this basis, Swain put forward the terms “comprehensible input” and “comprehensible output”. Comprehensible input is the premise of language acquisition, but it is not the fundamental aim of grasping a language. Comprehensible output is the destination for a language, and it can test the learner’s vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic appropriateness, it can also promote the efficiency of second-language acquisition and make the learner equipped with the ability to use the language right automatically. Thus comprehensible output plays a significant part in elevating the learner’s capability of using the language.

2.3 Other Studies About Language Input and Output

Anderson (1982) and Levelt (1989) both hold that language output can promote the learner’s linguistic proficiency, and can help the learner to accelerate the speed of converting declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge. Hamer (1988) thinks language input must be practiced through various activities; only by this means can the input be stored in the learner’s memory and finally become a part of the learner’s own language. Scovel (1998) points out that the output system and the modifying and monitoring system in the brain interact during language communication, and this interaction makes the learner realize his linguistic deficiencies and spurs him to overcome the deficiencies to make further progress. Brown (2001) thinks that language input and output are two indispensable elements for acquiring a language. Sufficient comprehensible input is the premise of output, and language output is the process to absorb and consolidate the input and to cultivate the learner’s ability of language application. Izumi (2002) analyses that language output can stimulate the learner to make further progress if the learner is aware of the gap between what he wants to output and what he actually outputs, thus making him do language output more proficiently.

3. WEN QIUFANG’S PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

Influenced by Swain’s theory of Comprehensible Output, Professor Wen Qiufang from Beijing Foreign Studies University put forward Output-Driven Hypothesis in 2008. Her theory is based on the experiment of Chinese students for foreign language learning. Compared with the traditional foreign language teaching method, which emphasizes much on language input, she thinks Output-Driven Hypothesis has three advantages in language teaching (Wen, 2008). Firstly, from the psychological angle, output-driven teaching can give the learner greater drive for enhancing his language ability. Secondly, from the vocational angle, compared with the receptive

capabilities like listening and reading, the learner’s output capabilities like speaking, writing, and translating are more practical for their later job. Thirdly, from the angle of foreign language teaching, output-driven comprehensive teaching strategy is more efficient than single teaching method, thus can cultivate compound foreign-language talents for the society.

After she put forward Output-Driven Hypothesis, Professor Wen applied the theory in her team’s language teaching practice to test the adaptability of the theory. During the experimental teaching, her team found that the Output-Driven Hypothesis only highlighted the importance of language output, but did not define the role of language input, as language input is also fundamental in language teaching (Peng, 2019). Consequently, it is difficult for the teacher to deal with the relationship between input and output. Therefore, in 2014, Wen revised her “Output-Driven Hypothesis” into “Output-Driven and Input-Based Hypothesis”. In Oct. 2014, she formally named her theory as “Production-Oriented Approach” in the 7th International Symposium on English Education in China.

Production-Oriented Approach has three sections: teaching concept, teaching hypothesis, teaching process. In 2016, for the section of teaching process, Wen added Teacher-Student Cooperation Assessment, which she thinks is very indispensable for the theory. Besides Teacher-Student Cooperation Assessment, she advocates to give full play to the intermediary role of teachers in the teaching process (Li, 2019). In 2017, based on the analysis of Chinese students’ characteristics, Wen added “Evaluation-Leaning Hypothesis” to the teaching process, in order to highlight the interaction and circulation of teaching; in addition, she converted “the intermediary role of teachers” into “the guiding role of teachers”. In 2018, as for the section of teaching concept, Wen added cultural exchange theory, and changed “comprehensive education theory” into “key capability theory”. As to the section of teaching process, she formulated the circulation of “drive, promote, evaluate” and emphasized a teacher-guided cooperative teaching process between teachers and students.

After more than ten years of development, Wen’s theory of Production-Oriented Approach has been basically formed. It is based on Chinese foreign language teaching practice, and it is a teaching theory with Chinese characteristics.

4. THE ADVANTAGES OF PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

The theory of Production-Oriented Approach is derived from the foreign-language teaching practice of Chinese students. After many years of development and revision, the theory has become ripe, has been applied in teaching by many Chinese teachers, and has reaped satisfactory teaching effects. In terms of language teaching, the theory has three advantages (Lin, 2019).

Firstly, as for teacher-student relationship in teaching, Production-Oriented Approach makes prominent the guiding role of the teacher, so as to ensure the efficiency of education. According to Wen's theory, the guiding role of the teacher acts throughout the teaching process. The teacher first devises a certain communicative scene and assigns the production task to the student, to stimulate the students' learning enthusiasm and motivation; then, the teacher and the students together conduct the input (including content, language form, discourse structure, etc.), to help the student to accomplish the production task; lastly, with the cooperation of both the teacher and the students, evaluations are carried out to test the efficiency of production output. The guiding role of the teacher is embodied in designing, organizing, supporting, evaluating the whole teaching process, influencing the learning effect of the students to a large extent.

Secondly, the language teaching process based on Production-Oriented Approach reflects the overall view of education, which conforms to the effective teaching law. One of the characteristics of Production-Oriented Approach is that it integrates curriculum theory and second-language acquisition theory. The curriculum theory formulates the overall framework of language teaching, and the second-language acquisition theory provides a theoretical basis for micro teaching links. Under the guidance of Production-Oriented Approach, the teacher can clarify the linguistic teaching objectives, make feasible teaching plan, carry out teaching scientifically and appropriately; thus the foreign-language teaching is in accordance with the teaching law and the essence of language acquisition.

Thirdly, Production-Oriented Approach focuses on the efficiency of learning process, and advocates learning for application. Every time the teacher assigns a production task, his primary concern should be what the students can learn from it; therefore, the final destination of teaching is to achieve the teaching objectives and promote effective learning, so as to ensure that the students can apply what they have learned into practice. The basic material for second-language acquisition is the text. But the final aim of teaching is not just acquiring linguistic knowledge or subject knowledge of the text, but also completing the production task assigned by the teacher.

5. THE APPLICATION OF PRODUCTION-ORIENTED APPROACH IN ENGLISH TEACHING

5.1 The Application of Production-Oriented Approach in Listening and Speaking Teaching

To apply the Production-Oriented Approach to English listening and speaking teaching, the teacher needs to integrate language output and input, and pays attention

to the organization of the teaching scheme. The teacher first introduces the background information of the teaching objective and assigns the production task of communication. Pay attention that the task should be a little more difficult than the student's English level, to make the student realize the gap between his present knowledge and the knowledge required by the production task, and also to arouse the learning interest of the students'. With the present knowledge, the students accomplish the production task of oral communication, and then the teacher helps the students to find their deficiency in listening and speaking.

When the students have realized their deficiency, the teacher should input the related information according their deficiency. The input information for listening and speaking includes vocabulary, language structure, cultural knowledge, communication skills and situational communicative knowledge. The teaching content of the input should focus on the unit objectives and production task. Not only is the selective input conducive to the promotion of oral communication, but it also greatly improves the teaching efficiency.

Next is the communication practice. After the related information input, the students have enhanced their communicative capability, which promotes the students to climb to a high level of listening and speaking. The communication practice helps the students to achieve the production task, which is the final destination of the teaching objectives.

In addition, multiple evaluation must be carried out during and after the teaching process. During the teaching process, the teacher should give immediate evaluation and adjust the learning direction. The teacher can also conduct peer evaluation and self-evaluation. Finally, the teacher comments on the students' production task and points out their communication problems and gives specific suggestions for further improvement. With the guidance of the teacher, the students can reflect on themselves, and so "promoting learning through evaluation" and "promoting teaching through evaluation" can both be achieved (Liu, 2019).

5.2 The Application of Production-Oriented Approach in Reading Teaching

According to Production-Oriented Approach, the teaching process begins with the assignment of production task, so the teaching of reading starts with the reading production task assigned by the teacher. The teacher can arrange some interesting, daily-life reading production tasks for the students as comprehensible input, to arouse the students' desire for reading. When the teacher assigns the reading production task, he should input the related background information. After the students have learned the related background information, their learning enthusiasm can be motivated, so as to ensure the enhancement of the students' reading ability.

When devising the reading production task, the teacher should not be confined to the explanation of difficult words and phrases, but to let the students analyze the overall structure of the passage and infer the implied meaning of the passage. Next is to let the students accomplish the reading production task and find their deficiency of summarizing and evaluating the passage. After the reading production practice, the teacher and the students together make evaluations for the learning process. During the evaluation, the students make clear their present reading capability, and endeavor to enhance their reading, thinking and evaluating abilities (Xie, 2021).

5.3 The Application of Production-Oriented Approach in Writing Teaching

Writing is the most difficult language task for many foreign-language learners; therefore, the writing production task may be the most difficult to complete. As for the teaching of writing, the teacher should first assign a challenging topic for the students to write as the production task. Then the students begin to accomplish the writing production task with the designated time. It is not important whether the students can do the writing task right (Zhang, 2019), the key is to let the students find their deficiency in writing, concerning vocabulary, language structure, style, thought, logic, common senses, etc. Next, in the light of the students' writing deficiency, the teacher inputs the related background information, including writing skills, discourse and stylistic structures. After the input, the teacher can ask the students to do the same writing production task again, to make the students realize their progress and get the feeling of accomplishment, which will stimulate them to be more interested in writing.

5.4 The Application of Production-Oriented Approach in Translating Teaching

The objective of translating teaching is to promote cultural exchange, to make the students contact and learn about the excellent cultures in the world. Chinese culture has a long history of more than five thousand years. With the Chinese government endeavoring to disseminating Chinese culture to the world, the teacher should devise some translating production task related to Chinese culture. The objective of these translating production tasks is to make the students more familiar with Chinese culture, enhance Chinese cultural confidence, and promote cultural communication. To help with the completion of the production task, the teacher should guide the students to reasonably process the cultural materials they are to translate, and impart the related grammar and discourse structure for translation.

After the translating production task has been completed, the teacher should carry out teaching evaluation and remedial teaching in time to consolidate and optimize the translation effect. During this process,

the teacher can input some related background information and translating skills, to elevate the translating capability of the students'. Finally, the teacher asks the students to translate the material again, to achieve better production for the students.

6. CONCLUSION

In order to enhance the efficiency of foreign-language teaching and convert the traditional way of language teaching, Professor Wen Qiufang has put forward the theory of Production-Oriented Approach. The theory is based on Canadian Linguist Swain's theory of "Output Hypothesis" which makes language output as the most prominent objective for language acquisition. Wen's Production-Oriented Approach regards language practice as the most significant goal for the teaching process, thus changing the traditional teacher-centered teaching mode. Under the guidance of Wen's approach, the center of teaching is the students, not the teacher; the teacher serves as the guidance of the students' learning. According to this approach, the teacher first assigns the production task for English listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating, and the later language input and evaluation is oriented toward this production task. The students view this production task as their learning objective and enhance their language proficiency accordingly. With the use of Wen's Production-Oriented Approach, not only has the teacher elevated the students' foreign-language acquisition level, but he has also improved the students' learning interest.

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