

Blended Teaching of Workplace Theme-based English in Vocational Colleges Based on Production-oriented Approach

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Abstract: This paper puts into effect the blended teaching of workplace theme-based English in vocational college English course based on Production-oriented Approach (POA). Teaching objectives, teaching tasks and teaching assessment are all designed and carried out under the guidance of POA. The results demonstrate that the English level and the workplace English ability of vocational college students have been improved by 3.5% and 4.7% respectively. It is safe to draw a conclusion that POA is feasible in college English instruction and could shed light on promoting teaching plans, methods and assessment in English instruction in colleges.

1. Introduction

English instruction in colleges are now confronted with intertwined problems such as large number of students with limited number of teachers, immense amount of content to be taught with finite class hour, weak English foundation of students with diverse professional knowledge to be imparted defined by the teaching guideline. To fulfill the teaching targets of college English courses and make the instruction of college English more efficient, it is advisable to design viable and practical teaching tasks that can both ensure students' daily English communication and their professional application of English knowledge in workplace.

Therefore, this paper designed theme-based teaching tasks of college English course in workplace situations and put the tasks into effect based on the Production-oriented Approach (POA) through blended teaching method (online teaching through web-based instructional resources platforms, mass media and other IT-based instruction methods and offline teaching via printed books and face-to-face instruction).

In recent years, POA has been applied in some actual classroom teaching to verify its effectiveness in college English teaching, and some research results have been made. ZHANG Wenjuan applied the theory of production-oriented approach to college English teaching practice, which proved its feasibility and showed preliminary teaching results. LIU Xiaoxing and SONG Min applied the theory to the design and practice of college English reading and writing teaching, and explored the reform of college English teaching mode in local colleges and universities [1]-[2]. The production-oriented approach has obvious Chinese characteristics. WEN Qiufang's paper details the Chinese characteristics of the production-oriented approach. ZHANG Lingli's paper tests the overall effectiveness of the production-oriented approach through a semester of experimental research. ZHANG Wenjuan's paper measures the impact of the production-oriented approach on the writing quality in the unit teaching experiment [3]-[5].

In vocational English teaching, the "Online + offline" blended teaching is particularly important, because it can stimulate students' desire for learning and improve learning efficiency [6]-[7].

2. Overview and characteristics of Production-oriented Approach

2.1 Overview of Production-oriented Approach

The Production-oriented Approach (POA) is a pedagogical hypothesis proposed by Professor WEN Qiufang and her team. There are three parts of the Production-oriented Approach, which are teaching principles, teaching hypotheses and teacher-mediated teaching processes. The teaching principles include “learning-centered”, “learning-using integration”, and “whole-person education” [8]. The teaching hypotheses are “output-driven”, “input-enabled”, and “selective learning”. It starts with teaching with language production and ends with production while input serves as an enabler to help accomplish productive activities. The teaching procedure is composed of three steps, namely motivating, enabling and assessing. In the motivating phase, teachers motivate students’ learning by creating appropriate communication situations and designing tasks with potential value of communication. In the enabling phase, teachers help students to select learning materials and provide students with learning materials necessary for the task so that students can accomplish output. In this phase, students can apply the language knowledge and communicative skills necessary for the tasks through the learning of the selected materials. The third step is assessing. Teachers make an evaluation after students accomplish their tasks. After the assessment, teachers should adjust the pace of instruction. In this phase, both teachers and their students assess students’ production and achievement.

2.2 Characteristics of Production-oriented Approach

The Production-oriented Approach emphasizes the importance of "output" and it combines "input learning" with "output application". It not only takes language output as the goal of learning, but also takes it as the driving means, which means students try to output first and teachers make adaption and adjustment according to the output made by students, and then reorganize the teaching contents and materials. In this way, language teaching could be developed and improved from a distinctive perspective. On top of that, POA integrates language learning with language using and language application is the focus with the aim to solve the problem of “separation of learning and using”. Teachers play a role of “scaffolding” and they get involved and provide necessary assistance throughout the entire teaching process.

3. Blended teaching of English in workplace based on Production-oriented Approach

3.1 Teaching materials and objectives

Before planning and practicing teaching tasks, teaching contents and materials were selected according to the need analysis of students of different majors, which could facilitate teachers to take targeted teaching methods and promote teachers’ teaching efficiency and students’ learning outcomes. To improve students’ motivation and boost interaction between teachers and students, the CBI (Content-based Instruction) is referred to in designing teaching tasks, since it can help engage core topics and skills of certain courses, and focus on working on the knowledge of the language [9 -11]. This method enables teaching and learning materials of the subject matter to become meaningful input. In addition, it integrates content from the subjects of students’ majors with the goals of target language teaching, and can ensure parallel acquisition of knowledge from certain non-linguistic disciplines together with the acquisition of the English and the skills of communicating in it. Based on the Production-oriented Approach, different themes were designed in compliance different workplaces, aiming to help students to be competent to apply English knowledge and communicative skills in certain situations of workplace.

3.2 Teaching tasks

To carry out the teaching tasks, first of all, students were divided into several groups on the basis of their need analysis. Students were given different groups of theme-based workplace vocabulary and scripts to understand and analyze, and students have to recite when necessary, because these workplace words and scripts can help students quickly enter the workplace and get familiar with the

workplace scenarios. In this step, task requirements were handed out through mass media such as WeChat, QQ. Secondly in face-to-face instruction, students simulated the workplace English and made the role-play practice in different workplace situations. In this process, teachers and students, students and students must communicate in English all the way. After the practice of each group, students expressed their opinions and feelings about the workplace simulation; the teacher made the assessment and detailed explanation of each task. Depending on the feedback of their companions and the teacher, each group made further improvement and did some other practice to reinforce the language knowledge and communicative skills. Finally, after the English workplace role-play and teacher's offline instruction, students made comments on the advantages and disadvantages of the simulated workplace practice as well as their own suggestions. Assessment in this phase were carried out via instructional resources platforms.

4. Results

From the perspective of Production-oriented Approach, the English level of vocational college students has been improved to a certain degree. Not only the English level has been improved, but also the English proficiency in workplace has been improved. This paper selected a class in a higher vocational school to study, and analyzed the changes of the students' English level before and after applying the POA. Through the research, we can find that the students' English level in this class has increased by 3.5% on average after using the POA, which can prove that the output-driven method has a great effect on English teaching. For the study of English workplace ability, we selected another class of students for the study. With the continuous research, we can find that after using the Production-oriented Approach, students gradually become generous and calm from the beginning of shyness and tension, and they are also very calm in dealing with a series of problems in the English workplace. Through these analyses and observations, we can find that students' English proficiency in workplace in this class has increased by 4.7% on average after using the Production-oriented Approach. The specific research results are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

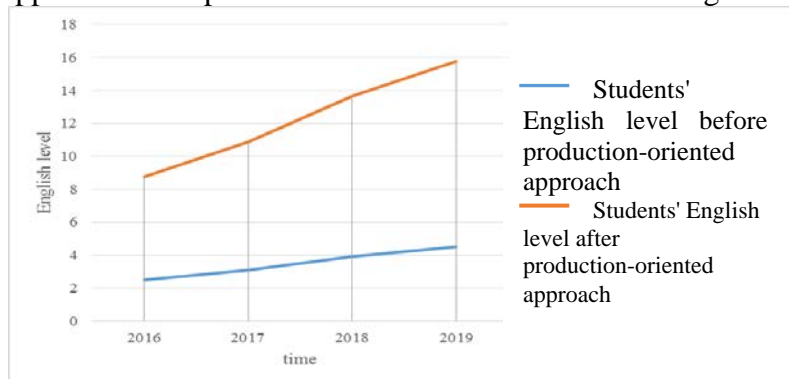


Figure 1 Students' English level before and after applying the Production-oriented Approach

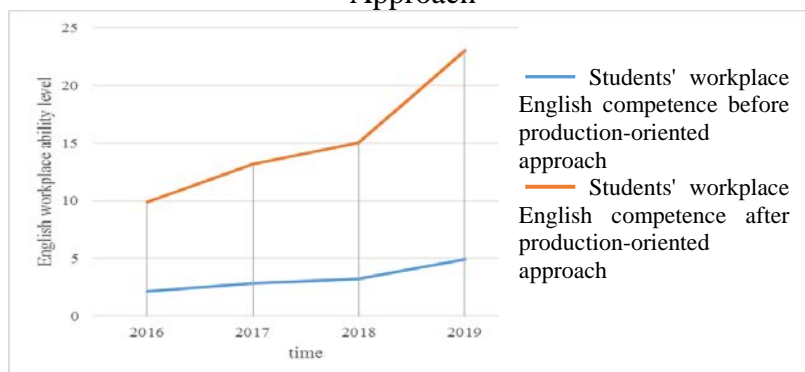


Figure 2. Students' workplace English competence before and after applying the Production-oriented Approach

5. Conclusion

Based on the Production-oriented Approach, this paper analyzed the blended teaching of college English course in workplace situations. After putting into effect the teaching tasks and analyzing the research results, it is safe to draw a conclusion that the POA is feasible in college English instruction. The study has helped escalate the efficiency of college English instruction and improve students' application of both book knowledge and communicative skills about English in concrete situations in workplace and daily life. In addition, however, there are many deficiencies in this study, such as the limit in the number of students engaging in the teaching practice, and no comparison of other vocational schools, which will be gradually solved in the future research.

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