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Applying Production-Oriented Approach to Promote Students' English Core Competence

-- Taking the Reading for Writing Selection of Unit2 Travelling Around in Compulsory Book 1 of New Senior English by People' Education Press as an Example

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Abstract: English teaching in senior high school aims at comprehensively improving students' English Comprehensive Competence and promoting the development of students' Core Competence. However, according to the high school English teaching practice at present, the problem of separation between learning and usage is very serious, and students' reading and writing abilities have not been effectively improved. In 2015, Professor Wen Qiufang put forward a foreign language teaching theory with Chinese characteristics -- the Production-Oriented Approach (POA). To a certain extent, this approach can be used to guide English teaching practice in senior high school to solve the problem of separation between learning and usage. Therefore, this paper will first introduce the POA, and then elaborate the specific application of it in senior English teaching, looking forward to effectively improving students' reading and writing abilities and developing their Core Competence.

Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach; Core Competence; Senior English.

1. Introduction

General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (2017) specifies that the Core Competence is not only the concentrated embodiment of the value of subject education, but also the correct values, essential characters and key abilities that students gradually form through subject learning. English subject core competence mainly includes linguistic ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. And reading and writing abilities are undoubtedly key input and output abilities in linguistic ability, and are also important factors in improving students' core competence. However, from the current teaching of senior high school English reading and writing classes, it can be seen that one of the problems is the serious separation of learning and usage, that is to say, students cannot apply the language knowledge they have learned in practice, and their reading and writing abilities have not been effectively improved. The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang (2015) emphasizes the integration of learning and usage, which provides an effective solution to the problem of separation of learning and usage. Therefore, this paper will elaborate the relevant theories of POA in detail, and through a senior high school English reading and writing class designed based on it to discuss the specific application of POA. The purpose is to improve the attention of teachers to POA and apply it to their own teaching practice, so that students' reading and writing abilities can be improved and their English subject core competence can be developed.

2. Description and Explanation of the POA

The origin of the Production-Oriented Approach is the Output-Driven Hypothesis (ODH) proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang in 2007. At the 7th International Conference on English Language Teaching (ELT) in October 2014, this hypothesis was officially named the Production-Oriented Approach, abbreviated as POA. The POA mainly consists of three components: teaching principles, teaching hypotheses, and teacher-mediated teaching processes. To help readers better understand the composition and application of the POA, this paper will describe and explain the three components in detail.

2.1. Teaching Principles

2.1.1. Learning-centered Principle (LCP)

The learning-centered principle advocates that classroom teaching activities should promote effective learning, that is to say, all activities designed by teachers should promote the achievement of teaching objectives. Under the guidance of this teaching principle, the POA first focuses on what students can learn. It should be noted that this concept is distinct from "student-centered" principle.

2.1.2. Learning-using Integration Principle (LUIP)

The learning-using integration principle advocates the combination of learning and usage. That is to say, it emphasizes the close combination of input-based learning and output-based usage. Guided by this principle, the POA believes that all teaching activities should be closely linked to usage, and students need to complete corresponding output tasks using the target language.

2.1.3. Whole-person Education Principle (WPEP)

The whole-person education principle advocates that education serves the comprehensive development of individuals. In foreign language teaching practice, teachers should not only help students achieve the instrumental goal of improving their comprehensive English language competence, but also achieve the humanistic goal of enhancing their critical and creative thinking.

2.2. Teaching Hypotheses

2.2.1. Output-driven Hypothesis (ODH)

The output-driven hypothesis advocates that output is both the driving force and the goal of language learning. In regular

teaching, teachers generally adopt a teaching sequence of input first and output later. However, the output-driven hypothesis emphasizes that the teaching sequence should be as "output--input--output." This is because this hypothesis suggests that students will discover their own language deficiencies after trying to output, thus becoming more motivated to learn.

2.2.2. Input-enabling Hypothesis (IEH)

The input-enabling hypothesis advocates that providing appropriate input by teachers will promote students' output. In regular teaching, the input provided by the teacher may be too difficult or too simple. Undoubtedly, such circumstances are not suitable for improving the output level of students. Therefore, this hypothesis suggests that teachers should provide sufficient input in a timely manner to effectively expand students' language reserves and improve their output levels.

2.2.3. Selective-learning Hypothesis (SLH)

The selective-learning hypothesis advocates that selecting useful parts from input materials for deep processing based on output tasks. In regular teaching, students often need to learn all the word forms and grammar knowledge that appear in the article. This obviously increases the cognitive load on students and is not conducive to learning the most useful knowledge. Therefore, this hypothesis emphasizes that students should choose the most valuable and useful parts for deep learning.

2.3. Teacher-Mediated Teaching Processes

2.3.1. Motivating

In the motivating process, the most important thing is to make students aware of their language deficiencies, thereby stimulating their desire for the final output. This process includes three teaching steps: (1) the teacher presents a communicative situation; (2) students attempt to complete communicative tasks; (3) the teacher explains the teaching objectives and production tasks.

2.3.2. Enabling

In the enabling process, the most important thing is to provide scaffolding for students and cultivate their awareness of self-directed learning. This process includes three teaching steps: (1) the teacher describes the production tasks; (2) students engage in selective learning with guidance and inspection from teachers; (3) students practice production tasks, and teachers provide guidance and inspection.

2.3.3. Assessing

In the assessing process, the most important thing is that the assessments should be targeted and differentiated, preferably through joint assessments by teachers and students. This process includes four teaching steps: (1) teacher and students collaboratively learn assessment criteria; (2) students submit production outcomes; (3) teachers and students assess the production outcomes in class; (4) teachers and students assess the production outcomes out of class.

3. A Reading and Writing Class Based on POA

3.1. Teaching Content

The teaching material is the reading for writing selection of Unit 2 Travelling Around in compulsory book 1 of new senior English by People' Education Press. The content of this article is an email written by Richard to a friend about his travel plan. And this passage includes 4 paragraphs: paragraph 1 is about the main purpose for the trip; paragraph 2 is about other plans for the trip; paragraph 3 is about the transport; and paragraph 4 is about the final thoughts of Richard. Through this class, students can learn how to write a travel plan.

This reading and writing class are designed based on POA, and the teaching processes includes motivating, enabling and assessing.

3.2. Teaching Objectives

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

(1) master key words and phrases, such as amazing, unbelievable, sights, statues, look forward to and so on;

(2) summarize the structure of this passage and main idea of each paragraph;

(3) write a concise and well-organized travel plan;

(4) develop writing and cooperating abilities.

3.3. Teaching Key and Difficult Points

(1) Students can summarize the structure of this passage and main idea of each paragraph;

(2) Students can write a concise and well-organized travel plan.

3.4. Teaching Procedures

3.4.1. Motivating

Step 1: The teacher presents a communicative situation

The teacher shows students a short video about Xi'an and asks the following questions:

Q1: Where is it? What's your impressions about this city?

Q2: Where do you want to travel?

Q3: Do you make a travel plan before you go on a trip?

Q4: What are included in a travel plan?

This activity can not only attract students' attention and interests, but also present a communicative situation to activate their existing background knowledge and introduce the theme of this passage.

Step 2: Students attempt to complete communicative tasks

Through the above activity, students have been known that the theme of this passage--travel plan. Based on it, students need to communicate with group members on their own and try to discuss their travel plans. Through this step, students can become aware of their language deficiencies and develop a desire to learn.

Step 3: The teacher explains the teaching objectives and production tasks

In this step, the teacher needs to clearly indicate the teaching objectives and final production task of this class--write a concise and well-organized travel plan. Only in this way can students have a clear goal orientation and engage in selective learning in the enabling process to complete the final production task.

3.4.2. Enabling

Step 1: Pre-reading

Activity 1: Prediction

Activity Process: Students need to guess what are included in this travel plan and which sights will Richard and his parents go.

Activity Level: Remembering and understanding activity.

Justification: Through this activity, students can comprehend the theme of this passage more deeply and predict the content of this passage more reasonably.

Step 2: While-reading

Activity 1: Skim and match main idea of each paragraph

Activity Process: Students need to skim this passage and match the main idea of each paragraph.

Activity Level: Remembering and understanding activity.

Justification: Through this activity, students can be able to master the reading strategy of skimming, and use this strategy to grasp and understand the main idea of each paragraph, thereby organizing the structure of the passage.

Activity 2: Read for language

Activity Process: Teacher firstly need to guide students to notice the sentences about When, Where, Why, What and How. Then, teacher guides students to discuss in groups to brainstorm more expressions about When, Where, Why, What and How in a travel plan. At last, the structure and language features of travel plan need to concluded.

Activity Level: Applying and analyzing activity.

Justification: Through this activity, students can not only grasp the structure and language features of travel plan to lay a solid foundation for the final production task, but also communicate with their classmates to improve their communicative competence.

Activity 3: Underline the words and phrases used to express emotion in the email. Then complete the sentences below.

It is an amazing sight → It is _____
I'm amazed.
I can't believe it.
... is almost unbelievable → It's hard _____ .
It's an _____ story.

Activity Process: Students need to underline the words and phrases used to express emotion in the email, and complete the sentences above.

Activity Level: Applying and analyzing activity.

Justification: Through this activity, students can learn and accumulate the words and phrases used to express emotion in the travel email, which can provide some useful expressions for the final production task.

Activity 4: Mind map

Activity Process: Teacher need to guide students recall the whole passage, and ask them to complete their own mind maps.

Activity Level: Applying and analyzing activity.

Justification: Through this activity can not only make students develop their logical thinking ability and information integration ability, but also guide them to summarize and organize the passage, preparing for the final production task.

Step 3: Post-reading

Activity 1: Group discussion

Activity Process: Based on the above activities, teacher need to guide students to further brainstorm what should be included in a travel plan.

Activity Level: Evaluating and creating activity.

Justification: Through this activity, students can enrich writing materials and prepare adequately for the final writing.

Activity 2: Imitative writing

Activity Process: The teacher presents the mind map again, and students can enrich it through their discussion. Then, they need to write their own travel plans based on the original text.

Activity Level: Evaluating and creating activity.

Justification: Through the above activities, students have obtained sufficient input. Therefore, they can write a concise and well-organized travel plan.

3.4.3. Assessing

Step 1: Teacher and students collaboratively learn assessment criteria

The following is the assessment criteria for this writing. Teachers need to guide students to read and learn it to help them better understand how to assess.

Is there a clear purpose for the trip?

Does each paragraph have a clear main idea?

Does the writer use the present continuous tense for future plans?

Does the writer use commas, stops, and question marks correctly?

Are all the words spelt correctly?

Are all the proper nouns capitalized?

Step 2: Students submit production outcomes

Before submitting, the teacher need to clarify the accurate submission time and format.

Step 3: Teachers and students assess the production outcomes in class

In the classroom, group evaluation can be conducted based on the assessment criteria, followed by teacher evaluation. It is important to note that evaluations must be targeted and differentiated.

Step 4: Teachers and students assess the production outcomes out of class

This step emphasizes the joint evaluation between teacher and students, with the production outcomes submitted by students as the basis for formative evaluation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it can be seen that Professor Wen Qiufang' s Production-Oriented Approach with Chinese characteristics is conducive to solving the problem of the separation of learning and usage in senior high school English teaching. This approach through three teaching processes, motivating, enabling and assessing, to make students aware of their language deficiencies, stimulate their desire to produce, and make them expect to receive more input to complete production tasks. Therefore, teachers should have a deep and comprehensive understanding of this approach, and apply it to their teaching practice, so that students' English subject core competence can be developed.

Finally, this paper's teaching design is not yet mature enough, and there are still many details that need to be improved. In a word, it can be expected that excellent teachers can use the POA to design more valuable teaching cases for reference.

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