

An Integrated Mode Study on College English Teaching of Listening and Speaking: Based on Output-driven, Input-enabled Hypothesis

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Abstract—This paper discusses how college English teaching of listening and speaking can be carried out based on the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis. The author probes into an integrated teaching mode from the following four aspects, including the change of teacher's role, the applicability of teaching activity, the cultivation of student's comprehensive ability to apply language and the objective and effective combination of summative assessment and process assessment. In teaching process, the teacher should be aware of the close interaction between listening and speaking, the stimulation of critical thinking and the importance of culture teaching.

Index Terms—output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis, college English teaching of listening and speaking, teacher's role, teaching activity, assessment

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of English learning has already been widely recognized by most Chinese students, and at the same time they have shown the urgent need to improve their English listening and speaking ability, which is also emphasized by *The Teaching Requirements of College English Course* issued by Higher Education Department of Education Ministry in China (2007), in which there are some specific regulations about the comprehensive ability to apply language. Students can not only communicate in English in different ways in their work and social interactions, but also develop their self-learning ability and improve their overall cultural quality in order to adjust to our social development and international communication. However, in current college English teaching, input and output cannot keep the balance. Research shows that college students spend 80% of their time on the input information, that is to say, they spend little time on output. So does the listening and speaking course. The teaching content is outdated and fossilized, and the teaching pattern is comparatively fixed, so the whole class is boring, which is harmful to cultivate student's interest in English learning and communicative ability. The reform of English teaching is emergent.

Wen Qiufang, a famous scholar in China, put forward the output-driven hypothesis, and modified it into the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis after putting it into teaching practice, which implanted a whole-new idea in our English teaching reform and provided advanced theoretical support. This thesis aims to probe into a creative classroom pattern of listening and speaking course of college English based on the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis, which is beneficial to improve college student's overall quality of English application, and is instructive and valuable to cultivate application-patterned English personnel to satisfy the development of economic globalization. This paper consists of six parts. The first part is the introduction to the paper. The second part briefly introduces the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis. The third part exposes the current problems lurking in the college English teaching to be solved. The fourth part specifically discusses the characteristics of the new teaching method. The fifth part is one example to illustrate this method. The last part is the conclusion.

II. OUTPUT-DRIVEN, INPUT-ENABLED HYPOTHESIS

There is a long history of research about the input hypothesis and the output hypothesis all over the world.

Stephen Krashen puts forward the Monitor Theory in 1980s, with the input hypothesis as its focus. The input hypothesis concludes that learners can master the target language only when they have access to sufficient "comprehensible input". According to Krashen (1985), the comprehensible input refers to the language information that is a little bit difficult to understand than learner's current level of competence. The input hypothesis gives light to the research about foreign language learning, but it focuses only on the language input and exaggerates its function and ignores the central position of learners. The large amount of comprehensible input cannot ensure the input being comprehensible unless learners are provided the quantities of opportunities for meaningful interactions.

The comprehensible output hypothesis, developed by Merrill Swain, is very famous in the field of second language acquisition. Swain indicates that the comprehensible input cannot make second language learners employ it correctly and fluently. According to Swain (1985), successful second language learners not only have access to a large amount of comprehensible input, but also produce the comprehensible output. In the process from effective input to output,

learners practice the input information stored in their brain over and over again, and finally apply it fluently. This is also the process of learner's potential language acquisition externalized. Producing a second language including speaking and writing is a part of the process of second language acquisition. The comprehensible output hypothesis proposes that output can enhance fluency and act as a means of reflecting on what is said or written, but it seems to exaggerate the function of output and separate the alternate process of input and output.

In the reform of the current curriculum and teaching methods for English majors, Wen Qiufang has made great contributions. She proposes the "output-driven hypothesis" aiming at the middle and advanced levels of English learners. According to Wen Qiufang (2008), it consists of three sub-hypotheses. Firstly, from the perspective of psychological linguistics, the output-driven hypothesis indicates output can promote second language acquisition more than input. Without being driven by output, high-quality input cannot ensure the efficiency of acquisition. Secondly, the output hypothesis proposes that cultivating learner's expressive skills—speaking, writing and translating has more social function than receptive skills—listening and reading. Thirdly, from the perspective of English teaching, the integrated approach with output oriented is more effective than the single skill training and lives up to the future employment.

After the output-driven hypothesis is put into the practical teaching, Wen Qiufang (2004) detects that there is no specific explanation about the relationship between input and output, so she modifies it into "the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis", which indicates that output acts as both the driving force and the target of language acquisition, while input is the approach to enable learners to finish the current output task, but does not only serve to cultivate learner's comprehension ability. Students need to concentrate on searching for the required language form and the concerned knowledge from the input information if they are determined to finish the output task assigned by their teacher.

III. PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

English teaching has been developed in the past thirty years and satisfied the great demand of social and economic development of our country. On the other hand, many problems lurking in the traditional English teaching method emerge gradually. Dumb English has been the target of public criticism. Although the listening and speaking ability has gained a lot of attention these years, there are still many problems to be solved because of the long-term traditional teaching method.

Firstly, the class atmosphere and the teaching method are not adequate to the development of listening and speaking abilities. Classroom atmosphere is an important factor and proof to assess teaching effect, and also a reflection of mental expression of teachers and students. Studies show that students have high learning spirits and prompt reactions so that they can internalize the learning material quickly while students may have psychological confrontation and breed passive feelings towards study if they are under the boring, rigid, tense and repressive atmosphere. A major problem of listening and speaking class of college English is that the class atmosphere is not active where teacher works as a machine to input listening material while students have little even no time or courage to express. Over time students are not willing to speak English in class.

Secondly, student's anxiety is a very important emotional factor to affect English listening and speaking. According to linguist Horwitz, language anxiety refers that learners feel anxious because of the insufficient communicative ability when learning second language or foreign language. Under the test-oriented English learning system students focus on their ability of gaining high scores and at the same time neglect their listening and speaking. They cannot understand what they have heard or speak up their ideas in the mind, which is the situation that frustrates most students, and therefore, a big anxiety is formed. This kind of anxiety makes them unwilling, embarrassed and ashamed to communicate in English, their interest in English disappearing gradually.

Thirdly, the topics in listening and speaking course are a little outdated and incommunicative and cannot arouse student's interest to communicate. English language atmosphere is in a great demand. In current colleges, English class is usually big, and almost 60 students sit in one classroom. It is very difficult to allow every student to speak out freely and organize various oral activities.

Fourthly, learners have little understanding about the background and culture of the English-speaking countries. Without the recognition of their background knowledge and culture, sometimes it is very difficult to understand what native speakers say. Without understanding what they say, learners cannot output their reply. That is to say, understanding the background knowledge and culture of English-speaking countries is vital to real communication with native speakers.

All in all, those problems lurking the current English teaching and learning system are harmful to English learners. This system needs to be reformed immediately. The output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis modified by Wen Qiufang provides a direction and guideline to college English teaching reform.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW TEACHING METHOD

After applying the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis in the past school term, the author tries to summarize four characteristics from teaching practice over and over again as follows.

Firstly, there is a role change of teachers and students in class. The listening and speaking course of college English based on the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis promotes the teaching idea of teachers as the guide and students as the subject in order to motivate student's potential and desire to express and finish the output task. That is to say, all of the teaching activities need teacher's elaborate guide and student's active participation, which is very important to determine the teaching efficiency. In the last century, a teacher-centered system is dominant, where teachers have the pure authority to instill the teaching material while students have little time to participate in class teaching. In this kind of system, students only accept passively the instilled knowledge. Over time, the boring class cannot appeal to half of the students. Since the 21st century, a student-centered teaching idea, to some degree, has weakened teacher's role in the classroom teaching. Although classroom teaching is doomed to serve students, it does not mean that teachers are not important in class. Teachers are trained professionally and have a comprehensive understanding of the language system, and have a clear idea of the teaching focus and difficult points. Therefore, teachers should control the progress of the classroom teaching, adjust the teaching strategy consciously and provide help to students in time, finally reaching the best teaching and learning performance. All in all, in the class based on the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis, teachers should be the teaching designer and manager, student's cooperater and assistant, and evaluator of learning and teaching efficiency. Teachers input language knowledge selectively and skillfully, and assign corresponding and interesting output tasks, and at the same time students search for the concerned knowledge according to the output task, and accomplish the output task with the assistance of teachers. The harmonious cooperation of teachers and students make the learning process successful and effective.

Secondly, the teaching activity should be designed practically and interestingly. When designing the class, teachers should think about student's structure of knowledge, learning aims, learning style and learning environment, and then decide the ideal teaching content, strategy of recognition, teaching procedures in order to realize the student-subjected teaching objective of improving their comprehensive ability to apply English language. On the other hand, teachers should teach students in accordance with their aptitude. When designing the teaching method, teachers should think about the different major background of learners, their individual difference and their different language performance in order to assign the output tasks, with clear intention, approximately real situation and rich language context, which are neither too easy to make learners lose their interest nor too difficult to frustrate learners at the first sight. All of these requirements are great challenges to teachers, which mean that teachers must be familiar with all the teaching material and students and know how to arouse student's enthusiasm to take part in the class activities and finish the output task wonderfully. Teachers need to search for a number of heated social topics to design appropriate output tasks. The better and more interesting the output task is, the more creativity and enthusiasm may be aroused. Internet provides great convenience and resources to teachers. Take Unit One of *New College English Listening and Speaking Course 3* as an example. The topic of that unit is about parents, a very common topic. However, if the teacher can play such video as *A Touching Interview* and *There is Nothing My Father Cannot Do*, which are very popular and clicked thousands of times, students must sympathize with the characters in the video and be encouraged to finish the output task the teacher has assigned. Thus, the successful designation of teaching activity is the first important thing in the teaching process.

Thirdly, the ability of applying language comprehensively should be cultivated. That is to say, listening, speaking, reading, writing and interpreting should be practiced at the same time. In the listening and speaking course, students need to note down the key words or the main points while they are listening. Students need to speak out what they have heard, even retell the listening material. Students need to interpret the listening material they have heard. Students need to write down the missing words in the passage while listening. Students need to summarize the main idea that they have heard. After they have understood all of the listening material, they are divided into several study groups to speak out their reflection and make oral comments on what they have heard. This kind of teaching design starts from the easier to the more difficult step by step. Teachers assign the output task first before inputting information and knowledge, which may arouse learner's thirst for knowledge. In this way, students can be motivated to study actively to the maximum and finish the assigned oral and writing tasks. The effective interaction between input and output makes all of the learning material linked perfectly.

Fourthly, the assessment system must be objective and effective. The summative assessment is not suitable to assess learner's level of language application. The process assessment is a good supplementary approach. Learner's comprehensive ability to apply English can be shown only through the combination between the summative assessment and the process assessment. In the listening and speaking class, the output of language is the main objective. What needs to be assessed is the ability to apply the English language, that is to say, to accomplish something in English, instead of the knowledge of English language. Therefore, the summative assessment at the end of term is not sufficient, and the process assessment in the daily learning is more valuable and important. Every student can also see clearly his or her own progress on English learning through this kind of progressive assessment, which will increase their interest and courage to learn English. The more they speak, the better they speak. The positive cycle make them more enthusiastic to learn English. Students pay more attention to class participation and are more active to accomplish the output task. All of these make class atmosphere more active and harmonious. The combination of these two kinds of assessment approaches can also show learner's performance more objectively. In addition, the feasibility of assessment should be ensured. Teachers should make students know the clear standard of assessment and establish a diversified assessment system including learner's self-assessment, mutual assessment and teacher's test and assessment. Teachers

can divide students into several groups. When one group is presenting their oral task, other groups can be judges and make their comments. In this way, all learners participate effectively, and their output of listening and speaking ability is reflected objectively. The combination of these two approaches of assessment can truthfully show learner's progress and their current expressive ability.

V. ONE ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

In this part, the author tries to illustrate how to design a teaching activity and implement the whole teaching process based on the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis. Take Unit 4 from *New College English Listening and Speaking Course 3* as an example. The topic is about marriage, a topic easily arousing student's enthusiasm. The whole class (including two periods of class) is divided into 5 steps. The first step is a lead-in introduction to the topic. The second step is to assign the output task. The third step is to input the concerned information. The fourth step is student's preparation of the output task. The last step is the presentation and assessment.

A. *Lead-in Introduction*

When leading into the topic, the teacher can use some beautiful pictures or videos of love and marriage or quote some classical words to arouse student's interest in the topic, giving a vivid description of marriage. Meanwhile the teacher also mentions there are a lot of challenges and troubles in the daily marriage life, including many trifles not worth mentioning. The teacher can ask their students some questions like this: what's your attitude towards love and marriage? What is your standard of choosing a future spouse? What is crucial for a happy marriage? How should husband and wife deal with these challenges and troubles in their real life? Have you heard of marriage agreements? Do you think a couple should sign an agreement before getting married? After the teacher asks these questions, students may have some time to hold a discussion. Through these questions step by step, students are led to the focus of the unit—marriage agreement.

B. *The Assignment*

After the warm-up introduction and discussion, the teacher begins to assign the output task. The teacher can divide the class into several groups, each group including four or five persons. According to the above discussion, the teacher can assign two output tasks. The oral task is to present your idea on the marriage agreement. Students may give their answers based on questions like: Do you think a marriage agreement is necessary to a happy marriage? Is marriage agreement harmful to romantic love? Is marriage like a business if the marriage agreement is signed? The written task is to decide a marriage agreement based on the discussion of group members.

C. *The Input Information*

Before playing the listening task, the teacher should briefly explain the new words first. When students are listening first, they should try to finish Exercise 1, choosing the right answers to the questions. When they are listening again, they should try to write down some important information to complete the missing answers. When they are listening the third time, the teacher should ask students to summarize the main idea of the conversation and repeat some mentioned articles in their marriage agreement. These three tasks get from the easiest to a little difficult. The teacher should choose some students to share their answers according to their language ability.

D. *The Preparation for Output Task*

When students are preparing their output task, the teacher should offer proper help in time according to student's individual ability of applying language. Study group should be divided reasonably. There should be at least one student good at speaking English. Therefore, others group members can be encouraged to take part in the discussion. In this process, students are encouraged to search for more information. For example, they are allowed to search for the concerned information online. At last, every group should select one representative to present a speech as their group opinion. Besides, they should turn on a written task of marriage agreement that all of the group members discuss altogether.

E. *The Presentation Assessment*

The assessment is a very important part of the output. When one group is presenting their idea on marriage agreement, other groups should be concentrated on the speaker. This is also a very good chance to practice their listening and test if they can understand their classmate's speaking. In this process, they may get a lot of benefits. They can learn from those students who are better than themselves in oral presentation. They can also find the mistakes their classmates have made in their speech so as to avoid similar mistakes happening. After the presentation is finished, the teacher should make a pointed comment according to the speaker's performance. Keep in mind that the teacher's assessment should be specific and focus on the highlight of the presentation. The teacher's pointed and effective assessment will encourage students more because students will be more enthusiastic when they get teacher's recognition. At the same time, students need to offer their comments and assessment. A further interaction, even a debate is easier to arouse student's interest. At last, the speaker himself gives his own assessment. After the teacher and classmates offer their comments, the speaker may be motivated and produce more creative ideas, and at the same time it is a process of reflection.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis, this paper probes into an integrated mode of college English teaching of listening and speaking. After a teaching practice for a whole term, the feasibility of this integrated teaching mode can be ensured. When the integrated teaching mode is implemented, there are the following three points that can never be neglected. Firstly, in the listening and speaking course, speaking, as a form of output, is both the drive and aim, while listening is an approach to input information, enabling learners to complete the output task. Therefore, listening and speaking are interactive and closely connected. The applicableness of the input information is very important. The more relevant the input information and the output task are, the more enthusiasm learners can invest. In this way, the learning efficiency can be ensured. Secondly, when inputting information, the teacher should pay attention to learner's critical thinking and self-study ability. Critical thinking and self-study ability are very necessary for high-quality personnel and in a great demand in the future career. To cultivate these two kinds of ability is beneficial for students to adjust to the development of the future society and career. Finally, language teaching and culture teaching should be integrated. As students have improved their ability of applying English language, teachers should pay more attention to the culture teaching and improve their intercultural communication ability. These two are also interactive.

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