A Design of the Teaching and Training Mode of Elementary Oral English Course in Independent Colleges Based on Production-Oriented Approach

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Abstract. A good command of oral English is given great importance by both language learners and employers for the opportunities it offers in job hunting and promotion. Therefore, how to help students speak the language fluently and effectively is the first priority for every English teacher. For that reason, a design of the teaching and training mode of elementary oral English course in independent colleges based on Production-oriented Approach is made. After one semester of experiment, it proves to be effective in guarantee the improvement of students’ oral English output and their oral English communicative confidence and ability with sufficient, effective and purposeful language input. It is hoping this research may bring reference and enlightenment for teachers of the same research direction.

1. Introduction

One dream of all of the English learners is to be able to speak fluent English and to carry out barrier-free communication with the native speakers. With a good command of oral English students will get more opportunities in job hunting and promotion. Therefore, the significance of spoken English is naturally catching the eye of both teachers and students. Chinese Ministry of Education has also clearly stipulated that oral English as an important assessment will be included in CET-4 and CET-6. But current situation of oral English teaching in college is not optimistic. For one thing, obstacles in pronunciation caused by the differences between the sound systems of the two languages hinder students especially those who speak a dialect of Chinese from a quick success. For another, without enough confidence and interests most students are reluctant or dare not to participate in the classroom activities. They acknowledge that they want to say something but they don’t have the words and expressions they wanted to use in stock. Apart from that, teachers feel frustrated for being involved too much in the traditional teacher-centered teaching design and failed to stimulate and provide students more space to practice their oral ability.

In essence, the problems mainly lie in the deficiencies in instruction design of English spoken course. How to stimulate students’ interests and improve their oral expression level within an unreal language communication environment? How to provide students with enough linguistic input so as to achieve effective output and finally improve both teaching and learning efficiency? When is the proper time to correct students’ errors in pronunciation, grammar and sentence structure? All of these factors have to be considered in the instruction design of an English spoken course. Just as Lu Jingju (2007) proposed that oral English teaching should be guided by one theory, focus on student-centered training design and let extracurricular activities help enhance and enrich the effect in-class study.

2. Production-Oriented Approach

Production-oriented Approach is proposed by Prof. Wen Qiufang (2015) after over 10 years’ researches, study and reformation. According to her interpretation, POA is made up of one teaching philosophy which emphasize the learning-centered principle, the learning-using integrated principle and the whole-person education principle, one teaching hypothesis which is constituted by an
output-driven hypothesis, an input-enabled hypothesis and a selective learning hypothesis and one teaching process which includes three phases of motivating, enabling and assessing. While applied in the teaching design, the teaching philosophy in POA is always the guidance, the teaching hypothesis is the theoretical support of the teaching process and in turn the teaching process is a practical way of realizing both the teaching philosophy and the teaching hypothesis. According to literature retrieval, a large number of college teachers made attempts to improve the teaching efficiency by applying POA to the design of various courses and positive reports are given. Therefore an attempt on the purpose of improving the oral ability of the freshmen from the independent college is made.

3. A Design of the Teaching and Training Mode of Elementary oral English Course in Independent Colleges Based on Production-oriented Approach

3.1 Analysis of Target Students

It is true that students from the independent colleges in the northwestern part of China are comparatively weak in English especially in spoken ability. Apart from obstacles in pronunciation, the outstanding issues such as lacking confidence, not being interested, having nothing to say, being lost for words and using Chinese pidgin English all need to be given serious attention put into consideration by teachers in the design of the teaching and training mode of the course.

3.2 Analysis of the Teaching Material

The textbook we choose to use for elementary oral English course is *Oral Workshop: Reproduction* published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. Altogether 40 lessons are constituted by story and conversation materials involving topics ranging from daily diet and life, leisure and entertainment, communication and consumption to seeking medical advice and attending school and so on. This book is designed mainly on the purpose of training and improving students’ narrative ability and skill.

3.3 Teaching Aims

In general, the teaching aims of this course is to improve students’ pronunciation and intonation as well as the ability in talking in English at length with the help of the activities such as story retelling, summary writing, role play, in-class discussion and pattern drill and to achieve the goal of carrying out daily conversation comparatively fluently by reorganizing the linguistic data they have mastered. A good teaching design should be able to help students build up confidence in standing up and depicting simple events with their own language in class, let them taste the happiness of communicating in English and enjoy the sense of achievement in cooperation.

3.4 Teaching and Training Design

According to the study and analysis of the data collected through literature retrieval, a comparatively workable classroom teaching and training design for the freshmen is constructed based on production-oriented approach. As shown below in Figure 1:
The teaching process involves the pre-class preparation stage, the implementation steps of classroom teaching and after-class consolidation plan and the exact step and details of each teaching stage can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.

| Pre-class Tasks | In-class Activities | Self Evaluation |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Text related mp3 (everyone) |  |  |
| Recitation tasks (within groups) |  |  |
| Questions for discussion (everyone) |  |  |
| Topic for role play (within groups) (alternative) |  |  |
| In-class Discussion (alternative) |  | Teacher Evaluation |
| Recitation Activity (PK between any two groups) |  | Peer Evaluation |
| Correction of the phonetic mistakes |  |  |
| Useful expressions for story retelling (in form of C-E translation) |  |  |
| Questions on the story (everyone) |  |  |
| Story Retelling Activity | With questions as the outline |  |
|  | Without questions as the outline |  |
| Role play (PK between any two groups) (alternative) |  |  |
| In-class Discussion (alternative) |  |  |
| Sentence Pattern Drill |  |  |
| Assignments for the next lecture |  |  |
| After class Assignment | Video shooting (the best role play design and performance) (alternative) | Self Evaluation |
|  | Writing a summary of the story | Peer Evaluation |
Based on the guidance of POA, pre-class tasks are mainly designed on the purpose of encouraging and mobilizing students to prepare themselves for the class. In order to perform well in class, students are forced unconsciously to remember language points, correct their pronunciation, discuss with their teammates and surf on the internet or look up the reference books to get and reorganize the information they need through constant self evaluation. Students’ principle of to be the master of the knowledge that is about to be used in class is a perfect implementation of the teaching philosophy of POA. In-class activities are designed on the belief that it is output rather than input learning that can stimulate students’ learning desire and enthusiasm. Classroom activities together with teacher evaluation and peer evaluation aimed at language reproduce not only encourage students to be more proactive in input learning so as to complete the output tasks but also urge them to make up for their shortcomings through extra input-learning efforts. There is a Chinese old saying: “One will get something new in looking over one’s old studies.” It is true in both traditional and modern pedagogical practice. Therefore, tasks designed in after class assignment will ensure students a sound command of the basic language skills and at the same time increase their learning motivation and desire through in-group cooperation and self and peer evaluation.

4. Conclusion

The improvement of spoken English lies in the language output. But effective output is the result of sufficient input. Therefore an idea of a design of the teaching and training mode of elementary oral English course for the freshmen is haunting in my mind. Based on the analysis on the students and the textbook under use, and the application of POA, the present teaching and training design is proved beneficial in arousing students’ desire and enthusiasm for oral English learning after being put into practice for one semester. Sufficient, effective and purposeful language input can guarantee the improvement of students’ oral English output and their oral English communicative confidence and ability. Yet, further refinement is still needed in the adaptation to the development and variation of both the learners and the learning environment.

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