

A Study on the Practice of English Major Reading Instruction Based on the Production-Oriented Approach

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Abstract

Reading courses in college English major programs have been identified by the students themselves as one of the major components necessary to obtain language knowledge and acquire academic literacy. They serve as communication channels. Nevertheless, traditional reading teaching has predominantly been input and comprehension-based, thus the vast majority of reading activities have been only the effective reading practice rather than the full-fledged integration of reading with output. The present work is a study within the theoretical framework of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) aimed at discovering the practical ways of a successful POA implementation into English major reading teaching. Teaching experiment lasting a semester was performed on two parallel sophomores classes in a Chinese university. The experiment involved the use of student output from activities such as academic summary writing, debate, and text rewriting at the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages. Data were gathered through questionnaires, classroom observations, comparisons of pre- and post-tests, and student learning journals, and were analyzed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The results show that along with students reading comprehension skills and academic output abilities, POA also effectively impacted students' critical thinking and classroom engagement. The results imply that the POA can act as a catalyst for a full learning cycle of "input - processing - output" among English majors, therefore shedding light on the college English reading instruction reform and offering some new ideas and practical references.

Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach, English major, reading instruction, higher education, teaching practice

1. Introduction

When it comes to the fast global world and the cross-border nature of tertiary education, students of English majors are not only required to master the language basics but also show their thinking ability and language skills through communication with people from other cultures and in academic research. Reading courses, as an important part of English major instruction, have been the main carriers of the idea of helping students to language knowledge accumulation, expanding their academic perspectives, and building their comprehensive competencies. But the reading instruction for English majors is still largely based on an "input-heavy, output-light" model, which means that the classroom activities are mainly vocabulary, grammar, and text comprehension, with less attention paid to students' ability to convert comprehension into language output and knowledge application. Such an imbalance often leads to low learning motivation, limited classroom participation, and a relationship between reading and language use that is at odds with reading. The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is an innovative teaching theory that is a new field of research in the area of second language acquisition and foreign language pedagogy. It concentrates on output-led activities and encourages the continuous engagement of input and output through "driving, enabling, and assessing" stages, which are cyclic in nature. POA both stresses the role of output in pushing the learner to a deeper level of processing and providing internalization, hence changing the pathway of learning from input-driven to output-driven, making it a tool for comprehension and accumulation of linguistic knowledge. Current research results reveal that POA has been successful in speaking and writing instruction. However, the exploration of its application in the English major reading course still remains. While taking this context into account, the present study selects sophomore English majors at a university as the research subjects to make POA part of reading teaching by planning and delivering output tasks for pre-, during-, and after-reading

stages. The goal is to study the effectiveness of POA in aiding comprehension skills together with academic output abilities. This paper is not just about providing clear indications and resources for English major reading instruction supported by empirical evidence, but also about giving ways and the possible implications for English education reform as a whole.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation and Core Concepts of POA

Doctor Wen Qiufang a fair voice in the realm of Chinese foreign language education is responsible for the creation of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA). The primary mission of POA is to resolve the issue of "big separation", that is, the separation of language learning and the use of the language. The theoretical backgrounds of the method are, to a great extent, the same as the ones of the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) theory, constructivist learning theory, and communicative language teaching. SLA research insists that the provision of input alone is ineffective in language learning; learners must be involved in output activities within real or simulated communication settings if they want to process the language, assimilate it, and engage more learning transfer. A constructivist learning theory point of view recognizes that the learner's personality and initiative are at the forefront of the process; the knowledge isn't given to the newcomer but rather constructed by him or her through relations and cooperation concerning a particular task or situation. It is a communicative approach that always keeps the language learning task in focus, underlining that language mastery covers not only the understanding of the input but also the successful practice and interaction with others during the real use. POA, with its theoretical justification, charts the course of the teaching process of three stages: driving, enabling, and assessing. A reading task that is tightly interlinked with the learning goals is the setting of the output task during the driving stage and thus the motivation is aroused as well as the students are led towards pre-reading skills. During the enabling part, the teacher's role is that of the supporter who, by the help of the chosen inputs, the well-planned instruction, and the continuous assistance, lets the students gather the linguistic as well as the cognitive routes that they need to accomplish the task. The assessing stage describes the evaluation of the task not only by means of accuracy and fluency but also in the level of the thoughts, the communicative effectiveness, and the strategic competence shown by the students. The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) by Wen Qiufang is an innovative pedagogy concept designed to break out of a known pattern which commonly leaves language learning and working with the language separately. In a nutshell, POA employs the principle of output orientation, task-driven learning, and teacher guidance merged with learner agency to warrant switching over to a learner-centered paradigm. It thus moves beyond the traditional stage where input dominates language learning and brings to the forefront the interactivity between input and output through output-driven processes, thereby offering both theoretical and practical grounds for reading teaching in English major[2].

2.2 Research on English Major Reading Instruction at Home and Abroad

Reading instruction has always been a central focus in foreign language education research. Overseas studies have long emphasized the integration of reading comprehension with critical thinking, viewing reading as a process of meaning construction and negotiation rather than simple decoding. Scholars such as Anderson (2008) argued that reading instruction should cultivate strategies such as prediction, inference, information integration, and critical evaluation to enhance learners' autonomy and intercultural competence[3]. More recently, international research has paid increasing attention to academic reading and interdisciplinary literacy, emphasizing that reading instruction in higher education should serve academic output, such as essay writing, literature reviews, and scholarly communication. In China, research on English major reading instruction began relatively late[4]. Early studies largely focused on textbook analysis and teaching models, with classroom practice often centered on linguistic knowledge transmission and discourse comprehension, while neglecting strategy training and output development. In recent years, with the reform of core English major curricula promoted by the Ministry of Education, researchers have increasingly emphasized critical thinking and academic literacy in reading instruction. To a certain extent, task-based language teaching and communicative approaches have been integrated into reading classes, indicating the integration of reading with writing and speaking. Unfortunately, two problems still dominate the scene: firstly, the "input-heavy, output-light" tendency is still alive, which means that students in reading get a lot of information but do not have enough opportunities to turn it into output and academic expression; secondly, the number of empirical studies is insufficient, as a lot of reform explorations remain theoretical or case-study level without systematic experimental design or enough data support. Considering this situation, the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) unveils a new vision for college English reading instruction. POA through output tasks which evoke students' engagement and internalization, thus, performance, directly solves the weaknesses of present reading pedagogy. However, research on POA in reading instruction is still in an exploratory phase, with most of the existing literature that focus on the application of POA in speaking or writing. The questions such as

the designing of output tasks for reading classes and the determining of the suitable balance between input and output still need further investigation. Consequently, empirical studies based on the realities of English major instruction are essential for the confirmation of the accessibility and the effectiveness of POA in reading pedagogy and for offering the practical implications for the future reform[4].

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Subjects and Teaching Environment

This research is aimed at second-year English majors at a comprehensive university and has chosen two parallel classes for the experimental sample. The students from the two classes are similar in terms of entrance scores and English proficiency levels. They have also received the same content and methods of instruction in previous English courses, which ensures comparability. The experimental group consisted of 45 students, and the control group had 44 students. Their ages were 18-20, and they all had completed the basic English courses required by the program and had a certain level of academic reading competence[5]. As for the teaching environment, the study was conducted within the framework of the required course English Reading and Writing II for English majors. The course, which was only one semester (16 weeks), 4 class hours per week. The instruction combined teacher-led lectures with student task-based activities. Classrooms were equipped with multimedia facilities that enabled text projection, corpus analysis, and real-time interaction. In addition to the classroom activities, students were obligated to practice reading and output assignments through the university's online learning platform, which is provided for submission of assignments, teacher feedback, and peer evaluation. This platform also made the process of systematic data collection and analysis more efficient[6].

From a teaching resource perspective, the study chose some academic and cross-cultural English reading materials that cover topics in society, technology, and the humanities. The reading materials were moderate in difficulty, suitable for second-year English majors, and had the potential to guide the students to deepen their understanding and cognitive processing of the materials[7]. Besides, the reading activities were also planned to engage closely with the output tasks such as information extraction, idea integration, critical thinking, and academic expression so that the POA approach can be easily implemented in real teaching situations. To be brief, the research subjects and environment were not only representative but also operationally feasible, which is a solid foundation for subsequent empirical investigation[8].

3.2 Research Methods and Instruments

To fully understand how effective the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) was in English major reading instruction at the tertiary level, this study first used a mixed-methods approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. A quasi-experimental design was used for this study with two parallel classes designated respectively as a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group was given reading instruction through the POA cycle which would include output-driven tasks before reading, input-enabling activities during reading and assessment after reading. The control group was allowed to continue with traditional reading instruction in which the teacher would explain the text and the students would do the comprehension exercises. The comparative teaching lasted for half a year, which was enough time to observe and measure possible differences between the groups not only in reading comprehension but also in output abilities[9].

The main instruments for data collection were as follows: Reading comprehension before- and after-tests: The tests include vocabulary, information extraction, logical reasoning, and critical thinking to measure the levels of comprehension and their changes. Academic output tasks: The tasks involved writing academic summaries, debates, and rewriting texts. The performance was evaluated based on the teacher's assessment and peer review.

Questionnaires: They focused on students' learning motivation, classroom participation, reading strategies, and learning attitudes. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement towards the statements and to gather perceptions and feedback on the POA model. Interviews and learning journals: The semi-structured interviews of the randomly chosen students from the experimental class were aimed at authentic learning experiences, while the journals were used for supplementary qualitative data. Classroom observations: The researcher and teaching assistants were observing the students' participation, interaction, and output performance, thus, they were providing the evidence of the effectiveness of the instruction objectively. Regarding the data analysis, the quantitative data were handled using the SPSS program, which included the use of descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-tests, and paired-sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-test performance between groups. The qualitative data were dealt with by content analysis. Student reflection coding to find learning motivation, participation, and output ability that have typical cases was the basis of the coding. This research, by applying various research methods and instruments, aimed to combine findings from both macro-level data and micro-level case studies, thus ensuring the reliability and validity of the conclusions[10].

4. Teaching Practice

4.1 Teaching Scheme Design

This study's teaching scheme conformed to the fundamental principles of the POA cycle—“driving, enabling, and assessing”—and was specifically designed to suit the objectives of English major reading courses. In line with this, a three-stage instructional process, i.e., pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading, was created[11].

Pre-reading: Output-driven task setting

The teacher before allowing the learners to have access to the target text created output tasks, which relate to the text theme and are likely to activate the learners' motivation. As an illustration, before reading an academic article on artificial intelligence and social development, students were asked to discuss in groups the topic “the impact of artificial intelligence on future careers” and prepare a short oral presentation. With this task, the students were led to carry out the reading phase with real questions and expression requirements, thus making reading a passive information intake to be changed into active preparation for output.

While-reading: Input enabling and strategy guidance

In the course of reading, the teacher gave guidance to the students on the need to pursue the understanding of the different levels of the text with a task-oriented mindset. Students were required to skim the text and get the gist of both its structure and main ideas; then they are to work with others and extract and integrate key information. The teacher supplied the needed scaffolding which could be logical connectors (e.g., therefore, in contrast, consequently) and academic expressions (e.g., it is widely acknowledged that...; from a critical perspective...). Group discussions supported information sharing and exchange of the points of view, thus, a deeper processing level was reached. Through this output-oriented input-enabling stage, students laid the linguistic and cognitive foundations they require to accomplish the tasks.

Post-reading: Output and assessment feedback

After the reading, students made specific output works that depended on the reading text and their group discussions, such as writing a 200-word academic summary, rewriting, or stating the main ideas and participating in a group debate. Teacher feedback, Peer review, and Self-reflection were among the several ways of assessment, in which the main methods were. The judging criteria were not limited to correctness of language and fluency only, but they also required the depth of thought, logical coherence, and communicative effectiveness. Hence, the idea "assessment promotes output, and output promotes learning" became an energetic cycle.

4.2 Teaching Implementation and Classroom Case

At the implementation stage, the study adopted an academic reading text on the theme of “Artificial Intelligence and Future Careers” to demonstrate the application of POA in a college English reading classroom.

(1) **Pre-reading: Task-driven activities**

The teacher assigned the output task: “Based on your existing knowledge, discuss the impact of artificial intelligence on future careers, and prepare a short group oral presentation.” Students engaged in group discussions and recorded initial viewpoints. This stage aroused learning interest and set clear goals for the subsequent reading.

(2) **While-reading: Input enabling**

Students read the text with task objectives in mind. They skimmed to summarize paragraph main ideas, then extracted and integrated key information in groups. The teacher provided timely scaffolding, such as logical markers and academic expressions, to support comprehension and critical analysis.

(3) **Post-reading: Output and feedback**

Based on the reading and group discussions, students wrote a 200-word academic summary and delivered a 3-minute group debate presentation. The teacher gave immediate oral feedback in class, followed by written comments using a scoring rubric. Peer review and self-reflection were also incorporated to ensure multi-dimensional feedback and continuous improvement.

To illustrate outcomes, the following table summarizes student participation and performance in the three major output tasks:

Table 1. Statistics of Output Task Implementation in the Experimental Class

Output Task Type	Participation Rate (%)	Average Score (out of 100)	Teacher Evaluation Dimensions (Language / Logic / Critical Thinking)	Peer Review Average Score	Self-reflection Completion Rate (%)
Pre-reading group presentation	95.6	82.3	78.5 / 80.2 / 74.6	80.1	92.4
Post-reading academic summary	100	85.7	83.4 / 84.9 / 81.6	84.2	96.8
Post-reading group debate	93.3	87.5	85.6 / 88.3 / 86.9	86.5	90.7

As shown in Table 1, student participation in output tasks was consistently high. In particular, all students completed the academic summary task, achieving satisfactory results across the dimensions of linguistic accuracy, logical coherence, and critical thinking. Peer review and self-reflection further ensured multi-perspective evaluation, helping students refine their output quality. This classroom case demonstrates that the Production-Oriented Approach not only improved students' reading comprehension and academic expression but also significantly enhanced classroom engagement and learning autonomy.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Quantitative Results

To examine the practical effectiveness of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) in English major reading instruction, this study conducted a quantitative analysis based on pre- and post-tests of reading comprehension and academic output tasks for both the experimental and control classes. The tests covered four dimensions: vocabulary comprehension, information extraction, logical reasoning, and critical thinking, with a total score of 100. The results indicate that the experimental class showed significant improvement in the post-test, with an average score increase of 13.8 points compared to the pre-test, whereas the control class improved by only 6.2 points. Among the four dimensions, the experimental class demonstrated the most notable gains in logical reasoning and critical thinking, suggesting that POA effectively fosters deeper comprehension and higher-order thinking skills.

Table 2. Comparison of Reading Comprehension Test Scores Between Experimental and Control Classes (N=89)

Class	Test Type	Vocabulary (25)	Information (25)	Reasoning (25)	Critical Thinking (25)	Total (100)
Experimental (n=45)	Pre-test	17.6	16.9	15.4	14.2	64.1
	Post-test	20.5	20.1	19.3	18.0	77.9
Control (n=44)	Pre-test	17.3	16.5	15.0	14.0	62.8
	Post-test	18.8	18.1	16.2	16.0	69.0

As shown in Table 2, the experimental class made significant progress across all four dimensions, especially in logical reasoning (+3.9) and critical thinking (+3.8), while the control class exhibited relatively modest gains. Independent-sample t-test results confirmed that the post-test differences in total scores between the two classes were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), validating the effectiveness of POA in enhancing reading comprehension and academic thinking skills.

5.2 Qualitative Results

For the qualitative analysis, this study drew on student interviews, learning journals, and classroom observation records to further explore the specific impact of POA on English major reading instruction. First, regarding learning motivation, students in the experimental class generally reported that task-driven activities under POA gave them clearer goals in class. One student noted during an interview: "In the past, reading classes were just about listening to the teacher explain the text. Now I have to think about how to express my own views in English before reading, and then look for support in the text, which makes me more engaged." Learning journals also indicated that many students felt output tasks helped integrate reading with language use, avoiding the "learn-and-forget" phenomenon. Second, in terms of classroom participation, observation records showed that experimental class students spoke more frequently in group discussions and debates, and the atmosphere was more interactive. Compared with the

control class, students were more willing to raise questions, challenge viewpoints, and organize their ideas with logical structures. Teachers' observation notes also highlighted stronger group cohesion in the experimental class, with discussions extending beyond surface-level information recall. Third, concerning thinking and expression, learning journals and classroom performance revealed notable growth in critical thinking. For example, in the unit on Artificial Intelligence and Future Careers, some students were able to integrate text content with real-world cases, arguing that "while AI may replace certain jobs, it will also create new opportunities." Such integrative and analytical thinking was less common in the control class. Finally, in terms of feedback from teachers and students, most students in the experimental class expressed positive attitudes toward POA. However, some students initially felt pressured by output tasks, especially those with weaker language foundations, who struggled with the demands of complex tasks in a short time. Over the course of the semester, these students gradually adapted, supported by group collaboration and teacher guidance, and accumulated the linguistic resources needed to complete the tasks. In summary, the qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results, demonstrating that POA not only enhanced students' reading comprehension and academic output but also increased their motivation, participation, and critical thinking, thereby providing a viable pathway for reforming English major reading instruction.

6. Discussion

The empirical results demonstrate that the Production-Oriented Approach offers significant advantages in college English reading instruction. First, POA effectively overcomes the traditional limitation of being "input-heavy and output-light" by establishing a complete learning cycle of "driving, enabling, and assessing." Students in the experimental class improved markedly in reading comprehension, logical reasoning, and critical thinking, confirming that output-driven instruction enables learners to process and transfer knowledge in authentic contexts, thereby enhancing both depth of reading and academic expression. Second, by emphasizing learner agency and integrating group collaboration and peer review, POA boosted students' motivation and classroom engagement. Rather than passively receiving knowledge, students became active thinkers and communicators under task-driven conditions, aligning well with the goals of higher education to cultivate innovative and application-oriented talent. Nonetheless, the study also identified several challenges in implementing POA. Some students initially felt overwhelmed by output tasks, particularly those with weaker language proficiency who experienced pressure when asked to complete complex assignments in a limited time. Moreover, teachers implementing POA face increased demands, including selecting suitable reading materials, designing diverse output tasks, and developing systematic evaluation standards, which require higher levels of professional expertise and classroom management. In conclusion, while POA shows strong potential for application in English major reading instruction, further exploration is needed in areas such as resource allocation, differentiated task design, and teacher training to enable wider adoption and sustainable development.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Production-Oriented Approach can effectively enhance students' reading comprehension, academic expression, and critical thinking in English major reading courses. Through the "driving-enabling-assessing" instructional cycle, students shifted from passive input to active output, with significant gains in classroom participation and learning motivation. Empirical evidence confirmed that POA not only bridges the gap between learning and application left by traditional reading instruction but also provides an integrated pathway for developing reading, writing, and speaking skills. Although challenges remain, such as task-related pressure on some students and increased preparation requirements for teachers, POA ultimately offers valuable practical experience and insights for reforming English reading instruction in higher education.

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