

# Enlightenment of POA to Integrated English Teaching —A Case Study of USST English Majors

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Based on the teaching practice of Integrated English course in University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and a survey concerning the degree of students' satisfaction with the course, we intend to reveal the enlightenment of Production-Oriented Approach (POA) to Integrated English teaching and explore the reasons why it can help to boost the teaching and learning effects of the course.

*Keywords:* Integrated English teaching, POA, enlightenment

## Introduction

*The Teaching Syllabus for English Majors in Higher Education* (*Syllabus* hereinafter) approved by the Ministry of Education at the beginning of 2000 clearly points out that Basic English (in some universities, it is also called Integrated English, the Course hereinafter) is a comprehensive English skill course. Its main purpose is to cultivate and improve students' ability to use English comprehensively. Through basic language training and text analysis, this course helps students gradually improve their reading comprehension, understand the characteristics of various English styles, expand their vocabulary, familiarize them with common English sentence patterns, and help them possess basic oral and written expression skills. Teachers should encourage students to actively participate in all kinds of language communicative activities in class to help them acquire basic communicative skills and meet the requirements of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation as stipulated in the new *Syllabus* (2000).

However, English teaching has frequently been criticized as time-consuming and inefficient (Dai, 2001). Some teachers only focus on texts while ignoring students' output (Zhang, 2016); some teachers deal with the texts very roughly or only regard the text as a topic, which leads to the ignorance of much important information in the texts, and some even do not know how to deal with the texts (Qu, 2016). Apart from that, teachers often focus on the early stage of a new course, but have no time to take care of the later evaluation, or pay no attention to it at all (Wen, 2016).

Based on a survey concerning the degree of students' satisfaction with the Course in University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (USST hereinafter), this paper aims to figure out the problems in the

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teaching practice of the Course, reveal the enlightenment of Production-Oriented Approach to the Course teaching and explore the reasons why it can help to boost the teaching and learning effects of the Course.

### Production-Oriented Approach

Production-Oriented Approach (POA hereinafter) was first put forward by Wen Qiufang at the 7th International Conference on English Language Teaching in China (Wen, 2015). It consists of three parts: teaching philosophy, teaching hypothesis, and teaching process.

Teaching philosophy includes three principles: (1) Learning-Centered Principle: It advocates that all activities of classroom teaching should serve the occurrence of effective learning, which challenges the popular “student-centered” concept at home and abroad. (2) Learning-Using Integrated Principle: “Learning” refers to input learning, including listening and reading; “using” refers to “output”, including speaking, writing, interpretation, and translation. This principle emphasizes close combination of input learning and output application, which are linked naturally without obvious time interval. (3) Whole-Person Education Principle: POA believes that as those who accept language education are people, with feelings and thoughts, educators need to take human intelligence, emotion and morality into account, so as to serve the overall development of human beings (Wen, 2015).

Teaching hypothesis includes three sub-hypotheses. (1) Output-Driven Hypothesis: This hypothesis believes that once students have clearly understood the significance of output tasks and realized their own shortcomings, they will be more proactive in input learning to complete output tasks in order to make up for their shortcomings. (2) Input-Enabled Hypothesis: This hypothesis suggests that, under output-driven conditions, providing appropriate inputs can help students achieve better learning results. (3) Selective Learning Hypothesis: “Selective learning” refers to the selection of useful parts from input materials for in-depth processing, practice, and memory to meet the needs of output (Wen, 2015).

POA teaching process consists of three stages: motivating, enabling, and assessing. Students are firstly placed in a certain situation to produce some output related to the situation. Then teachers identify the teaching goals and assign output tasks. Later, under the guidance of teachers, students do selective learning and produce output again. Finally, teachers and students learn the assessing standard and teachers evaluate students’ output (Wen, 2015).

### Current Teaching Status Quo of the Course in USST

To better reveal the teaching status quo of the Course, a questionnaire is designed to ascertain course satisfaction and problems that may exist in the Course. The respondents are first- and second-year undergraduates from eight classes in USST, all majoring in English. The total number of respondents is 88, including 36 first-year students and 52 second-year students. Among the students surveyed, some chose English major out of their own interest, some followed their parents’ advice, and the others were allocated to this major. However, it is found that no matter what the reasons are for choosing English as their major, students’ satisfaction is not influenced.

Table 1

*Students’ satisfaction with the Course*

Excellent	Good	Not really good	Terrible
3.45%	55.17%	35.63%	5.75%

Data above show that 58.62% of the respondents are satisfied with the Course while 41.38% are not. Now that more than 40% of the students are not satisfied with the Course, what are the reasons?

### “Demand” Versus “Supply”

According to the survey, about 75% of the students expect to consolidate their language foundation, enrich their knowledge, and improve their ability to analyze topics related to the text book, and these “demands” have been met. However, as is shown in the following table, there are other “demands” teachers fail to fully fulfill, which is a significant reason for students’ dissatisfaction.

Table 2

*Students’ demand vs. Teachers’ supply*

	Cultural differences between China and other countries	Abilities of logical and independent thinking	Insights into life and society
Demand	53.41%	59.09%	45.45%
Supply	35.23%	22.73%	29.55%

### Input Versus Output

There are some differences in after-class learning time between freshmen and sophomores. Freshmen usually spend 47 minutes on average every day learning something related to the Course (preview, review, homework, and so on), while sophomores only spend 33 minutes on it.

Table 3

*Students’ output*

Apply what is learnt to practice	Only apply what is learnt to exercise	Almost no output
5.75%	83.91%	10.34%

The table above shows that only 5.75% of the students can apply what they learn to practice, while most students only listen to teachers and passively accept some information related to the text book. Additionally, after teachers explain new words or other language points, students hardly have any chance to use them in class, nor do they have much time to share their opinions or thoughts in class, which demonstrates that learning and using are separated.

### In-Class Discussion

81.6% of the respondents hold the view that discussion in classes and interaction with teachers can help to produce better learning effects, but 78.16% of the students would not like to participate in class activities on their own initiative. The main reasons they provide are as follows: (1) being afraid of giving wrong answers; (2) being not fond of answering questions; (3) inappropriate teaching method and outdated topics; (4) insufficient knowledge.

### Teaching Method

Teachers usually adopt such a teaching model: (1) Warming-up: It aims to stimulate students’ interest in the new text. (2) Explaining texts and analyzing new words and language points: It is designed to help students fully understand the text. (3) Doing exercise in the textbook: It serves to reinforce those language points. This kind of model is mainly concerned with the content of the text, and there is no step-by-step activity in the teaching process, so students can hardly apply what they have learnt in class to practice.

### POA's Enlightenment to the Course Teaching

Firstly, POA's teaching philosophy is enlightening. Its Learning-Centered Principle, Learning-Using Integrated Principle, and Whole-Person Education Principle will help students achieve great progress not only in English learning but also in self-improvement.

Secondly, most of the students in the survey evaluate the Course teaching as boring. They do not know where their shortcomings are, nor do they know what to focus on. Therefore, they have lower efficiency and less enthusiasm for learning. In other words, they are not highly motivated. However, in POA, "Motivating" includes three steps: Firstly, teachers present communicative situations; secondly, students try to communicate; finally, teachers explain teaching objectives and output tasks. In other words, students are firstly placed in a certain situation to produce some output related to the situation. Then teachers identify the teaching goals and assign output tasks. With real communicative situations and clear tasks and goals, students will be more motivated to involve themselves in the teaching and learning process.

Thirdly, "Enabling" can also be divided into three parts: Teachers describe output tasks; students conduct selective learning, with teachers' guidance and inspection; students practice and produce output, and teachers give guidance and inspection. As is mentioned above, teachers' supply in class cannot meet students' certain demand. Students demand not only basic language competence, but also cultural literacy, speculative ability, and so on. To help students attain those abilities, teachers should select suitable input materials and guide students to deal with them in the "Enabling" process. Additionally, teachers can also encourage students to choose materials which meet their own needs to enhance students' autonomous learning ability.

Finally, in the questionnaire, 70.01% of the students say that teachers' assessment and feedback can improve their enthusiasm and learning efficiency, which emphasizes the importance of assessing. However, in limited class time, it is impossible for teachers to assess everyone. POA requires more output and more assessment. To evaluate each student, before class, teachers can select typical examples from students' output work. In class, students think, discuss with each other, and evaluate the typical examples selected by teachers so that they can find their own problems. In the discussion, teachers timely combine students' opinions with prepared evaluation materials, pointing out the merits and demerits. In this way, truly effective assessment can be done. After class, students make further revisions based on the evaluation and suggestions. After all these procedures, students can further understand their shortcomings and make progress.

### Conclusion

Integrated English course plays an essential role in consolidating English majors' language foundation. However, for various reasons, its teaching effects are far from being satisfactory. This case study shows that POA can help to solve some problems that exist in the teaching process of the Course. Although the students surveyed are all from one university and the analysis is not detailed enough, POA is worth trying and will be conducive to the improvement of both teaching and learning effects among teachers and students.

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