Practical Teaching Strategies for College English Based on the Output-Driven Hypothesis

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Abstract: With the continuous development and innovation of higher education in China, the development trend of education, from the extension type to the connotative type, is prompting the reform of college English. At present, college English emphasizes more on students' comprehensive English application skills and their comprehensive development in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, so that they can use English flexibly. The output-driven hypothesis is a teaching theory proposed in the current educational environment, which is devoted to solving many problems in English teaching, such as low efficiency and the separation of learning and application. This study makes a detailed analysis of the connotation of output-driven hypothesis and explores the problems existing in current college English teaching. The purpose of this paper is to put forward practical teaching strategies for college English under the concept of output-driven hypothesis.

Keywords: College English; Output-driven hypothesis; Teaching efficiency

1. Introduction

At present, college English teaching has been constantly strengthening the effectiveness of students' comprehensive English skills training, so that students can adapt to the social development. In recent years, there has been changes and reform to the content of CET-4 and CET-6 in China. IELTS and TOEFL training institutions are paying more and more attention to the assessment of students' comprehensive English skills, with a more flexible examination form. According to the actual situation of college English classroom teaching, teachers generally pay more attention to students' knowledge input, but neglect their knowledge output, and to some extent, they even disregard students' independent development level. However, in many cases, despite the introduction of technical means, such as multimedia teaching courseware, to strengthen the students' language training, language input, and output, teachers still emphasize a lot on words and key sentences to explain in detail the knowledge points; in addition, the interaction among students is minimal. Over time, their enthusiasm for learning will reduce, thus lowering the teaching efficiency. The output-driven hypothesis pays more attention to the close connection between language output and input as well as emphasizes the use of a limited classroom time to achieve knowledge input and the teaching objectives, as well as strengthen students' comprehensive utilization of English. This paper makes a detailed analysis of the application of output-driven hypothesis to the practical teaching of college English [1].

2. Connotation of the output driven hypothesis

The output-driven hypothesis is a teaching theory that can promote students' learning efficiency. This theory was first proposed by Stephen D. Krashen, a linguist, and has been widely applied in the field of language learning. The output-driven hypothesis holds that the acquisition of a language is sufficient only with intelligible input and is not directly related to the output of the language. However, Merrill Swain, a professor from Toronto, Canada, maintained a certain skepticism toward this input hypothesis and put forward the output hypothesis of comprehensibility. She believes that it is far from enough to input only on the basis of comprehensibility. It is not only necessary to integrate comprehensible input, but also to have corresponding output. Only in this way can they complement each other so as to improve the overall development needs of students. The output driven hypothesis has three main functions [2]. First, the function of attention. With the output of the target language, students would realize that they are unable to express the meaning accurately. Second, the function of hypothetical detection. From the perspective of learners, it can be understood that the output is just a state of experimental operation, in which learners select and use appropriate words and sentences to express the language and their viewpoints. Third, the function of reflection. The so-called introspection function refers to the use of language to self-reflect from the output of the language or other people's output of the language. When output-driven hypothesis is used, it mainly exercises English learning at two levels, mainly for the simultaneous training of comprehensive skills and single skills, which covers listening, speaking, reading, writing, interpretation, translation, and so on. The output-driven hypothesis takes a psycholinguistic perspective and holds that the output is more obvious than the drive generated by the input. Without output-driven learning, learning objectives cannot be achieved. Even with high-quality input, the learning efficiency is relatively limited. In addition, in light of contemporary workplace English learning needs, the introduction of the theory to teaching can strengthen students' comprehensive skills and achieve good teaching efficiency compared with traditional English classes [3].

3. Existing problems in current college English teaching

3.1. Uneven English level

According to the actual situation of college English teaching, there is uneven basic English knowledge among non-English major students. For the sake of their own competitive development, colleges and universities continue to expand their enrollment, which leads to the uneven level of students to a certain extent. In consideration of non-English majors, the English scores of these students in the college entrance examination range from 80 to 120 [4]. Many students can only master some simple words and grammar; they are at a loss for those that are slightly more difficult. Therefore, in college English teaching, if the "catch all" teaching method is still implemented, it would result in the problem of "not enough to eat" and directly reduce the efficiency of college English teaching.

3.2. Dominance of theoretical knowledge teaching

In view of the actual situation of college English teaching, the teaching of theoretical knowledge such as grammar, words, and phrases occupies a large proportion in class. College English teaching is characterized by "limited time with numerous tasks." At present, it is important to ensure a suitable proportion of English classes as knowledge application and comprehensive development are being emphasized [5]. However, the current excessive emphasis on theoretical knowledge easily leads to the phenomena where students do not have the opportunity to practice English, feel bored during classes, and fearful in learning college English. In addition, college English emphasizes the importance of language form. If students do not

receive practical training, they would face difficulties in using the language and applying the language knowledge in future work, thus failing to reflect the actual value of college English teaching.

3.3. Unscientific evaluation mechanism

In consideration of the current college English teaching evaluation mechanism, the phenomenon of "paying attention to written test" is still persisting. In order to improve their scores, the "sea of questions" tactic is still being widely used among students; however, they are not well-trained in oral expression and English application skills. At present, college English teaching is in urgent need of a scientific and reasonable teaching evaluation mechanism, so as to evaluate students' comprehensive level and skills as well as examine their grammar learning and language application skills [6].

4. Practical teaching strategies for college English based on the output-driven hypothesis

4.1. Determine the output target

Considering the actual situation of college students, their knowledge base in English is uneven. Therefore, when setting teaching objectives, it is essential to introduce the establishment of output objectives. Under the output-driven hypothesis, the output objectives of English knowledge learning for students at different levels should be clarified. College English teaching cannot meet the needs of talent cultivation in terms of listening and reading skills. Hence, under the output-driven hypothesis, it is necessary to reasonably design teaching objectives based on the different abilities of students [7]. In view of the current social demand for talents, differentiated teaching objectives should be set from three aspects: translation, language communication, and English writing. Students can be divided into three levels: A, B, and C. Level A students have poor English foundation and poor learning skills; level B students have average English foundation and learning skills; level C students have a good English foundation and learning skills. For the goal of A-level students, students should be encouraged to be more active and enthusiastic in English expression as well as guided to perform tasks for interactive expression. For B-level students, certain teaching situations should be established to guide students to carry out independent practice and perform tasks in specific situations, so as to promote their skills in comprehensive expression. For C-level students, their comprehensive expression skills should be strengthened to encourage them to use professional terms in specific situations and various expressions to complete the output tasks, so as to strengthen their comprehensive English skills.

4.2. Specify the output tasks

In order to achieve the teaching objectives under the output-driven hypothesis, it is necessary to design teaching output tasks scientifically and reasonably. In the context of the reform and development of quality-oriented education, college teachers should change the traditional teaching concept and create authentic teaching output tasks. For example, when designing output tasks, teachers can divide students into several groups and allow them to solve the given tasks independently. In the learning of "Five Famous Symbols of American Culture," teachers can first ask, "Who can introduce the American culture to us?"; then, they can ask the students to collect information independently and guide the students to introduce the American culture. This would fully stimulate students' independent ability and enable them to share their understanding of the American culture through pictorials, PowerPoint slides, speeches, situational performances, and other methods. In the setting of output tasks, by understanding other cultures, students have the opportunity to independently cultivate cross-cultural understanding. In consideration of students' future work and development needs, teaching tasks that can cultivate students' comprehensive skills should be designed.

4.3. Innovate and optimize the evaluation mechanism

In order to optimize college English teaching based on the output-driven hypothesis, it is necessary to assess students' comprehensive skills reasonably on the basis of output objectives and assume the teaching evaluation mechanism as the basic context to verify teaching quality [8]. Various evaluation methods should be introduced to closely combine stage evaluation with single evaluation. The "daily evaluation + final examination evaluation" method has been introduced. In terms of "daily evaluation," students' attitude, attendance, completion of homework, and other components are evaluated. For "final examination evaluation," students' comprehensive skills can be assessed from various aspects: examination score, situational language expression, translation skills, and so on. The assessment and evaluation method of "written score + practical assessment" can be introduced to carry out all-round assessment and evaluation of students' comprehensive skills. With the assistance of the innovative and optimized comprehensive evaluation system, the work of college English teaching under the output-driven hypothesis can be objectively reflected to ensure the extensive and comprehensive development of output-driven hypothesis teaching.

5. Conclusion

In a word, the practical teaching of college English under the output-driven hypothesis is of great significance. College English education should be in line with the current trend of the social demand for talents, timely determine the existing problems and solve them, realize the value of output-driven hypothesis, as well as promote the innovation of effective teaching strategies for college English by determining a clear output target, specifying the output tasks, as well as innovating and optimizing the evaluation mechanism, so as to promote the quality of college English teaching.

Disclosure statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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