



# The Enlightenment of Production-oriented Theory to Teach the Continuation Task

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**Abstract:** As a foreign language teaching theory with Chinese characteristics, production-oriented theory is the enrichment and development of foreign language teaching approach. In recent years, the research on production-oriented theory has involved all aspects of foreign language teaching. In 2016, it was officially used in the English College Entrance Examination of Zhejiang Province. Relevant studies have proved that it improves students' writing ability and overcomes the disadvantages of traditional writing being out of context. However, no research pay attention to relationship between the two. This paper mainly analyzes the development of production-oriented theory and continuation task, and proposes how to improve the quality of students' continuation task under the guidance of production-oriented theory.

**Keywords:** The continuation task, production-oriented theory, enlightenment of teaching

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## 1. Research background

Students' fear of writing essays has become a chronic problem in foreign language learning ( Wang Chuming, 2015).<sup>[1]</sup> English writing is a process in which learners express their thoughts in language. It involves the comprehensive application of various knowledge, it is very complex for students to get higher score. If the foreign language capacity of the learner is not good, the students' thought expression will be restricted, what's more, it may be affect their writing enthusiasm. Some researches have shown that the worse the students' language ability is, the greater the writing pressure will be. The compositions of the students with weak language ability are generally manifested as unitary vocabulary, severely interference by mother tongue ( Guo Chunjie & Liufang, 1997),<sup>[2]</sup> the sentences are not simple and fluent enough, many language errors and poor content coherence. Therefore, to explore effective methods to overcome the defects of writing ability and reduce writing pressure to improve the efficiency of foreign language learning has become a continuing topic in the field of second language writing research.

In recent years, integrated reading-writing tasks have been increasingly used in large-scale, high-stakes language tests due to their high degree of authenticity, potential for content-bias reduction, and positive washback . In the context of China, the continuation task, a new form of an integrated reading-writing task that requires learners to read and continue an incomplete story, is increasingly favored in language pedagogy and assessment. In 2016, the continuation task was adopted for the first time in the National Matriculation English Test ( Zhejiang Province version ) ( hereafter NMET-ZJ ), one of the largest-scale and most impactful standardized tests in China.

Recently, the educator analysis the effect elements of continuation task from four different prompts, they are bare prompt, framed prompt, ( requiring test-takers to continue the story based the opening sentence provided in each paragraph ) , a vocabulary prompt ( requiring test-takers' to use at least five underlined key words in the source text ) , and a framed vocabulary prompt ( requiring test-takers to continue the story using the opening sentence provided in each paragraph and at least five underlined key words in the source text ). The findings suggest that prompts that include both opening sentences for the paragraphs and required key words are likely to allow test-takers to better demonstrate their full writing ability, compared to prompts that integrate none or one of these elements ( Wang Jiaxin, 2019 ).<sup>[3]</sup> The

three prompts are useful to enabling the students to get higher scores, so teacher how to motivate students' motivation and let them can utilize the prompts to show their capacity become more crucial.

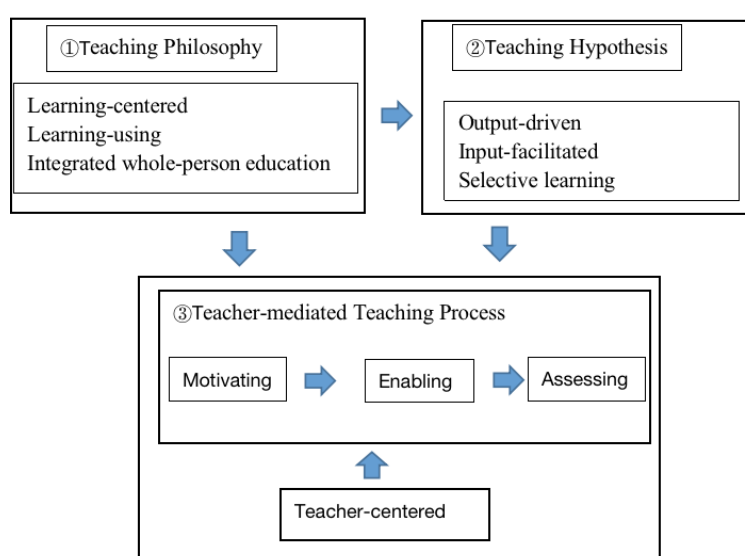
Based on the above points, although it solves some disadvantages of traditional writing by providing writing context, reducing the writing pressure and realizing the interaction between text and students, but it is still a challenge for low-level learners. Then, different types prompts are proposed to improve students' writing ability. After testing, prompts do help to improve students' writing quality, but they require great design of prompts, which can not only restrain students' imagination, but also drive students' production, which undoubtedly increases teachers' workload.

## 2. Production-oriented Approach ( POA )

POA refers to the exploration and attempt of foreign language teaching theory with Chinese characteristics constructed by foreign language educators represented by Wen (Wen Qiufang, 2015).<sup>[4]</sup>

The system consists of three parts: teaching philosophy, teaching hypothesis and teacher-mediated teaching process, as the picture 1:

The teaching philosophy includes three basic principles, learning-centered principle, learning-using integrated principle, whole-person education principle. It can be seen from the three basic principles that the theoretical system breaks the classroom teaching pattern of “teacher-centered” or “student-centered” and returns to the essence of classroom teaching, that is, teaching must achieve teaching objectives and facilitate effective learning. “Teaching hypothesis” is the theoretical basis of each link of classroom teaching, which needs to be tested one by one. This hypothesis advocates a close combination of input learning and production application, with organic linkage between them and no obvious time interval. “Teaching process” is not only the carrier to realize “teaching philosophy” and test “teaching hypothesis”, but also the means to archive the teaching goal of POA (Wen Qiufang, 2015, 2017).<sup>[5]</sup>



The three sub-hypotheses in the teaching hypothesis have gone through a long development stage, among which the hypothesis of “output-driven, input-facilitated” is the theoretical core of the system, and its development process is mainly described here. In 2008, Wen Qiufang put forward the “output-driven” hypothesis according to the curriculum of English professional skills course. This hypothesis is only applicable to middle and advanced English learners, and it is only limited to formal foreign language classroom teaching (Wen Qiufang, 2008).<sup>[6]</sup> In 2013, Wen Qiufang analyzed the “Output-Driven Hypothesis” and “Output Hypothesis” again, and pointed out the obvious differences between them. First of all, the starting point of the two hypotheses is different. The output hypothesis explores the second language acquisition theory, defining the different roles of input and output in the process of second language acquisition, while

the output driven hypothesis focuses on the efficiency of second language teaching, especially the teaching of middle and advanced foreign language learners, and explores how to make current foreign language teaching better serve students' future employment. In this sense, the output-driven hypothesis is a second language teaching hypothesis, not a second language acquisition hypothesis. Second, the two hypotheses are challenged on different subjects. Swain's hypothesis challenges Krashen's input hypothesis. Swain's hypothesis challenges Krashen's input hypothesis (Swain, 1985)<sup>[7]</sup>. Krashen believed that second language acquisition depends on the quantity and quality of input, and output is only a by-product of input, without direct help to language acquisition. The output-driven hypothesis challenges the teaching order of "input-driven output" and the teaching goal of balanced development of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating abilities (Krashen, 1985)<sup>[8]</sup>. This hypothesis is aimed at middle and advanced foreign language learners and advocates that teaching should take output as the starting point and ultimate goal (Wen Qiufang, 2013)<sup>[9]</sup>. In March 2014, at the academic research seminar on the development of college English teaching entitled "Form, Goal, Competence and Strategy", Wen Qiufang used the "Output-driven Input-driven Hypothesis and College English Teaching Reform" as the topic, and reported that the "Output-driven Hypothesis" was revised to "Output-Driven, Input-Enable Hypothesis" based on the experimental results (Wen Qiufang, 2014)<sup>[10]</sup>. In 2015, after nearly eight years of exploration and research, Wen Qiufang and her team proposed for a foreign language teaching approach with Chinese characteristic----production-oriented theoretical system, and changed "input" to "output". "Production" not only includes speaking and writing, but also includes interpretation and translation, which emphasizes both producing and produce (Wen Qiufang, 2015).

### **3.The enlightenment of production - oriented theory to the continuation task**

#### 1) Design driven production tasks to promote learning

Task design is the starting point and difficulty point of production - oriented approach. Teachers should set up "real" situations in the classroom and design production tasks with "potential communicative value" (Wen Qiufang, 2014) by presupposing students' possible communication situations in the future. On the one hand, the task design should consider its teaching value, and it should be able to realize the specific goal of the unit and ultimately contribute to the realization of the overall goal of the course. According to the theory of output-oriented method, classroom teaching takes learning as the center and teachers as the intermediary. In the teaching of continuation task, the contextual hints of the original text are very important. First, teachers can choose the text materials that students are interested in and fit for their real life, so that students can complete the task according to their actual experience. Second, POA believes that the selection of text topics should be conducive to the realization of humanistic goals, which can be divided into two categories: 1) conducive to the establishment of correct world outlook, outlook on life and values of students; 2) It is conducive to the cultivation of students' ability to communicate and learn from Chinese and foreign civilizations and to spread Chinese culture. In other words, one topic is about how to promote the healthy growth of students, and the other topic is about how to make students shoulder the social responsibility of promoting cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries (Wen Qiufang, 2015).

On the other hand, the difficulty of designing output activities should be moderate: 1) existing language proficiency and cognitive ability of learners should be taken into account. Tasks should be both challenging and can be achieved by students through learning, and hierarchical tasks should be designed if necessary to meet different levels of learners.; 2) considering the realistic conditions for students to complete the task. According to students' different language levels, hierarchical teaching to provide different difficulties of the original text, so that students can successfully complete the task and promote effective learning, but for teachers to increase the difficulty of the work. The latter mentioned that considering the realistic conditions of students' task completion mainly means that the quality of students' task completion is different under different motivations, which responds to the aforementioned design-driven production task, which makes students have the desire to express and adjust their self-learning motivation, the final to improve the

quality of the continued text.

## 2) Design input activities around production tasks and apply

In the three teaching links, with the mediation of the teacher “driven” link is the key and difficult teaching, teachers need around production task to give full play to the intermediary role, guide the students to select input material processing, to facilitate the production task completed, its purpose and “to teach the text as the main content” teaching mode the distinction that having essence, learning is not confined to understand the purpose of input material, more important is to complete the production task, teachers should be based on specific learning goals, guiding students to “selective learning” the input material (Wen Qiufang , 2015), to avoid no system rules in teaching.

Part is too much emphasis on “communicative” teaching model ignores link, it requires that teachers in guiding students in the process of the completion of a task, not only the task arrangement and inspectors, and should be “scaffolding” role in the whole teaching process, select the appropriate input material, fill the student to complete the task of “vacancy” and eventually to practice. In the process of writing after reading, teachers should break through the dominant form in traditional classroom teaching, give full play to the guiding role of teachers to students, and assign tasks to students. Teachers can provide key words and opening sentences when designing tasks, so as to improve the synergy between students’ continued texts and the original texts.

## 3) Balance the role of teacher scaffolding with the autonomy of students

One is to solve the problem through the hierarchical design of tasks. During the design of the task to distinguish the reproductive task and transferred task, learners can choose the images of the basic tasks, also can choose more challenge selection, selective learning guidance and product evaluation process, its role in teachers’ “scaffolding” should be based on students’ “ZPD”, adapt to the students’ language ability, emotional and cognitive development law of dynamic. With the continuous deepening of teaching and the development of students’ ability, the intervention should be gradually reduced and the scaffolding gradually withdrawn, so as to give play to students’ learning autonomy. When conducting classroom teaching, according to different situations of students, teachers can assign tasks with different difficulties . For students with higher language proficiency, they are required to complete the transfer task after completing the reproduction task with guaranteed quality. The transfer task is more challenging and requires students to make an expansion based on a full understanding of the full text.

## Conclusion

The production-oriented method introduces the teaching concept of “integrating learning with application”, adopts the new classroom organization form of “driving - contributing - evaluating”, innovates the foreign language classroom teaching mode, and constructs the blueprint of “localization” of English teaching method in China. It integrates “reading” and “writing” and makes up for the disadvantages of traditional reading and writing. It has been paid more and more attention by scholars in foreign languages. Through the analysis of the development background of output oriented theory and post-reading writing in China, the main research point of this paper is found: the enlightenment of output oriented theory on post-reading writing teaching. Based on previous empirical tests, three suggestions are put forward: 1) Design driven output tasks to promote learning; 2) Design input and facilitate activities around output tasks, and apply what you have learned; 3) Balance the role of teacher scaffolding with the play of student autonomy. This proposal is only obtained through literature analysis, not through experimental detection, and the existing problems in the actual operation process cannot be known, so the three suggestions proposed in this paper are for reference only.

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