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2025 Volume 3, Issue 5
Contemporary Education Frontiers
ISSN (Online): 3029-1860 ISSN (Print): 3029-1879

Integrating the Production-oriented Approach into Blended College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking Courses

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Abstract: The growing emphasis on educational informatization and communicative competence highlights the need to reform college English viewing, listening and speaking courses. Traditional models often overemphasize input while neglecting output, limiting students' engagement and intercultural competence. This study adopts the Production-oriented Approach (POA) as its theoretical framework and integrates it with the Xuexitong digital learning platform to design a blended instructional model. The model applies three core POA phases—motivating, enabling, and assessing—within a formative evaluation system. A unit from *New Horizon College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking 1* (4th edition) is used as a case for implementation. The blended POA-based approach enhanced students' learning engagement, autonomous study habits, language output, and collaborative skills. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of combining POA with digital platforms in English instruction and offers practical insights for future curriculum design and research on POA-based language instruction.

Keywords: Production-oriented Approach (POA); blended learning; College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking courses; instructional practice

Online publication: June 26, 2025

1. Introduction

In China where English is taught as a foreign language, College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking courses serve as a vital channel for cultivating students' communicative competence in English. The quality of such courses directly impacts students' international competitiveness and their ability to engage in cross-cultural communication. However, traditional teaching models often suffer from issues such as the separation of learning and use (commonly referred to in Western terms as the separation between "input" and "output"), as well as the disconnection between language learning and value guidance[1]. These limitations make it difficult to meet post-2000s students' diverse and individualized learning needs in the era of artificial intelligence[2]. Consequently, exploring how to leverage modern information technologies, integrate advanced pedagogical concepts, and innovate the design of College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking courses has become a central concern in current tertiary English teaching reform.

The Production-oriented Approach (POA), developed as a localized foreign language teaching theory in China,

offers valuable insights for addressing the persistent challenge of "emphasizing input while neglecting output" in English Viewing, Listening and Speaking courses. Its core principles, especially the "learning-centered principle" and the "integration of learning and use"[3], provide a theoretical foundation for reform. Guided by POA and supported by the technological advantage of the Xuexitong digital learning platform, this study designs and implements a blended model for College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking instruction. The model establishes a closed-loop system of "online output-driven – classroom input-enabled – platform-based assessment" to enhance teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.

2. Current Challenges in College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking Instruction

Structural problems persist in teaching content, methodology, and evaluation, all of which hinder the effectiveness of College English Viewing, Listening and Speaking courses.

2.1. Content lacking task orientation and authentic contexts

Most current courses remain textbook-centered, with materials primarily drawn from pre-fabricated listening drills and dialogue imitation exercises. Such content, divorced from authentic communicative situations, limits opportunities for meaningful language input and output tasks. As a result, students' motivation is weakened, and their ability to transfer and apply language knowledge in academic or social settings is restricted[4].

2.2. Teacher-centered methods undermining learner agency

Traditional instruction typically follows a fixed input-oriented sequence: teachers play audio-visual materials, students complete comprehension tasks, and teachers check the answers and provide explanations if necessary. This approach emphasizes input while neglecting output, with speaking practice often reduced to mechanical imitation and repetition. Students thus remain passive recipients, lacking opportunities for genuine "output–feedback–re-output" cycles that foster higher-order thinking and communicative competence. A task-driven, learner-centered pedagogy is therefore needed to encourage students' active participation in constructing language knowledge and applying skills.

2.3. Assessment emphasizing results over process

Evaluation in most courses continues to rely on final exams and mechanical assignments, paying little attention to students' engagement, cognitive depth, or progress in language use. Such summative assessment fails to capture learners' performance in communicative practice and overlooks higher-order abilities such as strategic competence and critical thinking. By contrast, the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) emphasizes "learning through assessment," and "learning as assessment" advocating dynamic, diversified, and formative evaluation to stimulate reflection, improvement, and knowledge transfer[2].

Addressing these challenges requires theoretically grounded innovations. The POA, with its teaching principles like learning-centered, learning-using integration, and teaching hypotheses like output-driven, input-enabled and assessment-as-learning, provides a solid foundation and practical direction for reform in blended learning environments.

3. The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) and Related Literature

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA), developed by Professor Wen Qiufang and her team, is an innovative foreign language teaching theory with distinctive Chinese characteristics[4-5]. Aiming to overcome the persistent problem of separating learning from use in foreign language education, POA emphasizes efficiency, applicability, and the seamless integration of input and output. It has become one of the most influential theoretical achievements in recent years, with significant impact on language teaching research and practice in China. The theory advocates "learning through use,

using while learning, and integrating learning with use" [1]. At its core, POA proposes a three-phase teaching process—motivating, enabling, and assessing—to stimulate learners' output needs, provide timely input-enabled support, and ensure tight coupling of learning and application.

The theoretical framework has undergone five developmental phases, with four central innovations that challenge traditional paradigms:

(1) Learning-centeredness: All instructional activities are ultimately for learning regardless of the argument about teacher-centeredness or student-centeredness. "The key lies in students acquiring knowledge and attaining academic success. The question of who is the center is merely a superficial issue, rather than the essence of education." [1].

(2) Output-driven hypothesis: Output provides the primary driving force for learning, reversing the traditional input–output sequence[6]. When students are assigned a genuine language output task, they are more motivated to learn for this purpose.

(3) Input-enabled hypothesis: Input is most effective when provided purposefully to support output[3,6].

(4) Assessing-as-learning: Integrated formative evaluation enhances learning outcomes more effectively than assessment separated from instruction[1]. Assessment can occur alongside learning rather than serving only as an outcome of it.

Over the past decade, members of the POA research team have conducted a substantial body of classroom-based action studies to examine the implementation strategies and pedagogical effectiveness of different stages of the approach. For example, Yang designed a micro-lesson focusing on the "motivating" phase of POA using the unit titled *Art and Nature* from *New Generation College English: Integrated Course 2*[7]. Zhang L. carried out a semester-long experimental study, which confirmed the overall effectiveness of POA[8]. Zhang W. evaluated the impact of POA on students' writing quality in unit-based instructional experiments[9]. Drawing on teaching practice, literature review, and self-reflection, Qiu, developed principles and strategies for designing the enabling stage[10]. Similarly, Sun explored four rounds of reflective teaching practice and proposed a set of principles and methods for "teacher–student collaborative assessment"[11].

Beyond the core POA team, frontline teachers and researchers across Chinese universities have also actively experimented with POA and demonstrated its effectiveness in diverse teaching contexts. For instance, Fan presented a concrete teaching design applying POA to business English letter writing[12]. Wang developed a blended online–offline teaching model for English courses in science and engineering universities, grounded in POA and adapted to the Chinese educational context. Findings showed that this model was well received by students, enhanced their intrinsic learning motivation, and improved their English proficiency[13]. In contrast, Miao reported that while POA significantly improved classroom listening activities, its effectiveness was limited for students with weaker English foundations, and its impact on improving test accuracy was less pronounced[14].

Against the backdrop of blended learning, integrating POA with digital platforms has emerged as a promising direction for addressing the "learning–use separation" problem. The existing body of theoretical and empirical research provides a solid foundation for designing and implementing a POA-based blended model for college English viewing, listening, and speaking courses.

4. Principles for Designing a POA-Based Blended Course in College English Viewing-Listening-Speaking

This study draws on both POA theory and blended learning pedagogy to design a course framework. The following principles guide the instructional design:

4.1. Activating students' potential within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Building on Vygotsky's theory of ZPD, tasks should provide an appropriate level of challenge. Overly simple tasks reduce motivation, while overly difficult ones risk frustration[15]. Properly designed challenges stimulate learners' engagement and cognitive potential. Moreover, positive emotions play a critical role, so creating emotionally engaging tasks fosters

sustained motivation and enjoyment in learning.

4.2. Fostering students' higher-order thinking

Aligned with Bloom's taxonomy, POA emphasizes tasks that stimulate analysis, evaluation, and creation. Output-driven activities require students to construct meaning, organize language, and engage in critical and creative thinking[3].

4.3. Encouraging active learning and learner autonomy

POA tasks are designed to be authentic and communicative, prompting students to identify and solve problems. Blended platforms provide flexible resources and individualized learning paths, further enhancing participation and self-directed learning.

4.4. Using but transcending the textbook

Textbooks remain a foundation, but content should be reorganized and expanded to serve output tasks. Digital resources can enrich materials and link textbook content to meaningful, integrated tasks, thereby enhancing authenticity and depth[6] .

4.5. Blended teaching mode

The model combines online and classroom instruction. Online tasks include preview, review, independent study, and submission and evaluation of outputs, while classroom sessions focus on teacher's concise and in-depth lectures, students' intensive practice, interaction, discussion, and collaborative task performance.

4.6. Formative assessment and feedback

A combination of immediate and delayed feedback enables students to refine both content and language form. The Xuexitong platform provides data tracking, allowing teachers to monitor progress and deliver targeted guidance. Self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment together foster reflective learning and continuous improvement.

Overall, these principles embody POA's core ideas while conducting blended teaching. Applied in multimodal environments, they promote integrated language competence, critical thinking, and active learner engagement, thus realizing the POA ideal of teaching–learning–assessment integration.

5. Teaching Practice and Outcomes

5.1. Teaching practice

To illustrate the teaching practice, the author selected **Unit 1 "A Break for Fun"** from *New Horizon College English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking 1* (4th edition, FLTRP) and implemented it through the *Xuexitong* digital learning platform. The participants were first-year undergraduates majoring in Journalism and Publishing from an ordinary college in China, classified as intermediate English learners. Classes were held in a language laboratory to facilitate teacher–student interaction.

Based on students' proficiency levels, a simplified POA model including Motivating, Enabling, Assessing (MEA) phases was adopted. Throughout the process, the instructor served as a mediator (organizer, facilitator, guide, collaborator, consultant), encouraging students to actively explore knowledge, develop conceptual schemas, and co-construct meaning. At the same time, the instructor acted as a motivator, inspirer, and promoter to support students in realizing and surpassing their potential[16]. The teaching procedure unfolded as follows.

5.1.1. Motivating Phase (Pre-class, online): Stimulating motivation, clarifying output goals, and initiating production

The phase was completed before class via Xuxitong. Drawing on the four unit objectives—*talk about leisure activities, listen for important details, keep a conversation going, interview a famous person*—the unit's final output task was defined

as a group-recorded celebrity interview. This task integrates the other three objectives in terms of content, listening and speaking skills. Students received the following instructions for their final productive task:

Work in groups to conduct a celebrity interview by following these steps: (1) Read about a well-known person you admire (from the textbook or of your choice). (2) Design interview questions. (3) Draft possible answers. (4) Rehearse before recording. (5) Apply the skills of keeping a conversation going. (6) Record and submit your video to Xuxitong. You may interview figures such as Su Shi from China, Leonardo da Vinci from Italy, or other admired celebrities.

To stimulate engagement, the instructor uploaded an English interview video of Dong Yuhui along with guiding questions (*What makes Dong Yuhui famous? What advice did he give young people? Do you agree?*). Students were then asked to attempt a preliminary production with peers and reflect on difficulties (*What makes your first try difficult?*). These tasks not only aroused interest and encouraged value-oriented reflection but also helped students identify gaps in their skills and knowledge, thereby generating a sense of "productive hunger" to motivate further learning[1].

5.1.2. Enabling Phase (In-class, offline): Building scaffold for final production through input and knowledge construction

Aligned with the unit task, students engaged in four MEA micro-cycles (see **Table 1**), integrating listening and speaking skills with content knowledge. This reflects POA's principle of breaking down the overall output into smaller goals, each closely linking input with output, thereby reducing the gap between learning and use[1]. In this phase, besides the materials provided by textbooks, the POA also expects a teacher to find suitable materials from websites or for students to search the internet for relevant materials under the teacher's guidance[6].

Table 1. Four Micro MEA Cycles of Enabling Phase

Micro-cycle 1	*Motivating:*	Small task—A dialogue: *How do you spend your leisure time? (Based on textbook section Opening Up*, teacher motivates students with some pictures and encourages students to have their first try.)
	Enabling:	Brainstorm music (e.g., *pop, classical, R&B, rock, country, jazz, rap*)/film genres(e.g., *romance, action, cartoon, thriller, documentary, suspense, comedy*) and students share answers via Xuxitong; learn sentence patterns for film discussion (e.g., *I like the film because it has an interesting plot; It was directed by...*). Teacher models and students pair practice.
	Assessing:	Dialogue presentations with teacher's instant feedback.
Micro-cycle 2	*Motivating:*	Small task—A mini-speech: Describe Chinese festivals (Mid-Autumn, Double Ninth, Confucius Festival). *(Based on textbook section Listen for Important Details*, teacher motivates students with an English video on Mid-Autumn Festival and encourages students to have their first try.)
	Enabling:	Listen to Harbin Ice Festival and view Bestival (materials from the textbook); summarize key elements of festival descriptions; teacher explains linguistic difficulties.
	Assessing:	Students present their speeches in class and on Xuxitong and the teacher gives instant feedback; students make comparative reflections on Chinese/Western festivals.
Micro-cycle 3	*Motivating:*	Small task—A role-play: talk about dining out based on textbook section *Keep a Conversation Going, first try by students*
	Enabling:	Targeted practice in conversational skills (drawing students' attention to linguistic form and content)
	Assessing:	Role-play with AI partner in *Unipus (the learning platform of the textbook by FLTRP)*, followed by AI feedback.
Micro-cycle 4	*Motivating:*	Small task—Group discussion: design celebrity interview questions (linked closely to final task).
	Enabling:	Read short introductions to Su Shi and Leonardo da Vinci; discuss their paths to fame (personal dedication, social responsibility).
	Assessing:	Submit interview questions and teacher gives instant feedback.

5.1.3. Assessing Phase (Post-class, offline): Refining production through feedback from peers and teacher

Students uploaded their group interview videos, scripts, and role assignments to Xuexitong. Collaborative evaluation was conducted through self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment based on five criteria: Appropriateness of questions, Use of follow-up questions, Interviewer's evaluation of responses, Clarity and confidence of delivery, Video quality (clarity and naturalness). If time permitted, exemplary works were showcased in class for further feedback. Students revised their products based on feedback, forming a productive cycle of output–reflection–improvement.

5.2. Learning Outcomes

When this unit was completed, survey data, student interviews, and classroom observations revealed three main benefits of the POA-based blended approach:

Increased engagement and motivation: Task-driven learning and the interactive platform encouraged active participation in discussions, simulated role-plays, and group projects, fostering a lively and positive classroom atmosphere.

Enhanced autonomy and language output: The integration of online and offline tasks provided students with more opportunities for meaningful communication, helping to bridge the gap between learning and use while cultivating self-directed learning.

Improved interaction and collaboration: Platform functions (instant-messaging, screen-sharing, discussion boards, collaborative assessing) supported continuous teacher–student and peer interaction. Group tasks promoted teamwork, communication, and negotiation skills, while collaborative assessing fostered reflective learning.

6. Conclusion

Although the POA-based blended model for college English viewing, listening and speaking courses has demonstrated some promising outcomes, several challenges remain. For instance, the limited duration of class sessions raises questions about whether assigned tasks can be effectively completed. Similarly, it remains uncertain whether students can fully utilize online resources beyond the classroom. Some learners also struggle with self-discipline and motivation in autonomous learning. In group collaboration, issues persist regarding whether all members contribute equally to task completion. Furthermore, the effectiveness of tasks must be examined to ensure that genuine learning occurs. On the teachers' side, updating online resources, providing timely feedback, and implementing formative assessment demand considerable time and effort, while the assessment process itself requires greater precision and personalization to better meet students' needs.

Addressing these issues requires continued exploration of POA theory and practice, as well as refinement of course design, enhancement of students' self-directed learning ability, and improvement of formative assessment mechanisms. Looking ahead, course design should be further optimized—for example, by ensuring the communicative authenticity of driving tasks—while expanding the resources available on the Xuexitong platform to offer students richer choices and experiences. At the same time, cultivating and guiding students' autonomous learning skills and strengthening feedback mechanisms within formative evaluation should remain priorities. Moreover, deeper integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into course design holds great potential. The latest studies have applied AI to POA-based textbook compilation [17], teaching materials use[18], and input-enabled instruction[19]. Future research may further investigate how AI can optimize feedback and assessment systems, enabling personalized, real-time support for students' learning progress and language output. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure genuine learning does occur for students.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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