

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

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## Abstract

In college English major programs, reading courses serve as a crucial channel for students to acquire linguistic knowledge and cultivate academic literacy. However, traditional reading instruction has long focused primarily on input and comprehension, neglecting the effective integration of reading with output. Under the theoretical framework of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), this study explores practical pathways for integrating POA into English major reading instruction. A semester-long teaching experiment was conducted with two parallel sophomore classes in a Chinese university, incorporating output tasks such as academic summary writing, debate, and text rewriting at the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages. Data were collected through questionnaires, classroom observations, pre- and post-test comparisons, and student learning journals, and analyzed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The results show that POA not only significantly improved students' reading comprehension and academic output abilities but also enhanced their critical thinking and classroom engagement. The findings suggest that POA can effectively promote a complete learning chain of "input-processing-output" among English majors, providing new insights and practical references for the reform of college English reading instruction.

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

## 1. Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization and the internationalization of higher education, English majors in universities are expected not only to acquire solid linguistic foundations but also to demonstrate strong critical thinking and language application skills in cross-cultural communication and academic research. Reading courses, as an essential component of English major instruction, have long undertaken the mission of helping students accumulate linguistic knowledge, broaden their academic horizons, and enhance their overall competence. However, current reading instruction in English majors is still dominated by an "input-heavy, output-light" model, with classroom activities largely emphasizing vocabulary, grammar, and text comprehension, while neglecting the cultivation of students' ability to transform understanding into language output and knowledge application. This imbalance often results in low learning motivation, limited classroom participation, and a disconnect between reading and practical language use.

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA), an emerging pedagogical theory in the field of second language acquisition and foreign language education, emphasizes output-driven tasks and promotes the integration of input and output through a cyclical process of "driving, enabling, and assessing." POA not only values the comprehension and accumulation of linguistic knowledge but also highlights the role of output in facilitating deeper processing and internalization, thereby shifting the learning process from input-driven to output-driven. Existing studies have demonstrated positive outcomes of POA in speaking and writing instruction, yet its application in English major reading courses remains in an exploratory stage. Against this backdrop, the present study selects sophomore English majors from a university as the research subjects and attempts to incorporate POA into reading instruction by designing and implementing output tasks at the pre-, while-, and post-reading stages. The aim is to examine the effectiveness of POA in enhancing students' reading comprehension and academic output abilities. This study seeks not only to provide empirical support and practical insights for English

major reading instruction but also to offer replicable approaches and implications for broader English education reform.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundation and Core Concepts of POA

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA), proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang, was developed to address the long-standing problem of the separation between learning and application in foreign language education in China. Its theoretical foundations are mainly drawn from second language acquisition theories, constructivist learning theory, and communicative language teaching. Research in second language acquisition suggests that mere input is insufficient for effective acquisition; learners must engage in output tasks within authentic or simulated communicative contexts in order to process language, achieve internalization, and facilitate transfer. Constructivist learning theory further emphasizes the learner's agency, proposing that knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed through interaction and collaboration in specific tasks and contexts. Communicative language teaching underscores the communicative function of language learning, stressing that language competence entails not only comprehension of input but also effective expression and interaction in real use[1]. Guided by these theoretical underpinnings, POA establishes a teaching process comprising three stages: driving, enabling, and assessing. The driving stage sets output tasks closely aligned with learning objectives to stimulate motivation and direct students toward purposeful reading. The enabling stage emphasizes the teacher's guiding role, in which carefully selected input materials, strategic instruction, and scaffolded support help students accumulate the linguistic resources and cognitive pathways necessary for task completion. The assessing stage focuses not only on the accuracy and fluency of output but also on the depth of thought, communicative effectiveness, and strategic competence demonstrated, thereby constructing a learner-centered, multidimensional evaluation system. In sum, the core concept of POA lies in output orientation, task-driven learning, and the integration of teacher guidance with learner agency, achieving a shift to a learner-centered model. It breaks away from the traditional input-dominant paradigm and highlights the interaction between input and output through output-driven processes, thus providing new theoretical and practical support for English major reading instruction[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. Some attempts have been made to integrate task-based language teaching and communicative approaches into reading classrooms, highlighting the integration of reading with writing and speaking. However, two problems remain prevalent: first, a persistent "input-heavy, output-light" tendency, whereby students acquire a large amount of information during reading but lack opportunities to transform it into output and academic expression; second, a shortage of empirical studies, as many reform explorations remain at the theoretical or case-study level without systematic experimental design or sufficient data support. Against this backdrop, the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) offers a new perspective for college English reading instruction. By driving students' engagement and internalization through output tasks, POA directly addresses the shortcomings of current reading pedagogy. Nevertheless, research on POA in reading instruction remains in an exploratory phase, with most existing literature focusing on its application in speaking or writing. Questions such as how to design output tasks in reading classrooms and how to balance input with output require further exploration. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct empirical studies based on the realities of English major instruction to validate the feasibility and effectiveness of POA in reading pedagogy and to provide practical implications for future reform[4].

### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1 Research Subjects and Teaching Environment

This study targeted sophomore English majors at a comprehensive university, selecting two parallel classes as the experimental sample. The students in both classes had comparable entrance scores and English proficiency levels, and they had received similar content and methods of instruction in prior English courses, ensuring comparability. The experimental class consisted of 45 students, while the control class had 44 students[5]. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20, and all had completed the foundational English courses required by the program, possessing a certain level of academic reading competence. With regard to the teaching environment, the study was conducted within the required course English Reading and Writing II for English majors. The course lasted for one semester (16 weeks), with 4 class hours per week. 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. Outside the classroom, students were required to complete reading and output tasks via the university's online learning platform, which supported assignment submission, teacher feedback, and peer evaluation[6]. This platform also facilitated systematic data collection and analysis. In terms of teaching resources, the study selected several academic and cross-cultural English reading materials covering topics in society, technology, and the humanities. The texts were of moderate difficulty, appropriate for second-year English majors, and capable of guiding students toward deeper comprehension and cognitive processing[7]. Additionally, the reading activities were designed to closely integrate with output tasks such as information extraction, idea integration, critical thinking, and academic expression, ensuring that the POA approach could be effectively implemented in authentic teaching contexts. In sum, the research subjects and environment were both representative and operationally feasible, providing a solid foundation for subsequent empirical investigation[8].

#### 3.2 Research Methods and Instruments

To comprehensively examine the effectiveness of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) in English major reading instruction at the tertiary level, this study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted, with the two parallel classes assigned respectively as the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received reading instruction based on the POA cycle, including output-driven tasks before reading, input-enabling activities during reading, and assessment after reading. The control group continued with traditional reading instruction, in which the teacher explained the text and students focused on comprehension. The comparative teaching lasted one semester, enabling an evaluation of differences between the two groups in reading comprehension and output abilities[9].

For data collection, the study employed the following instruments: Pre- and post-tests in reading comprehension: The tests covered vocabulary, information extraction, logical reasoning, and critical thinking to assess changes in comprehension levels. Academic output tasks: Tasks included academic summary writing, debates, and text rewriting. Performance was evaluated through a combination of teacher assessment and peer review. Questionnaires: Designed around students' learning motivation, classroom participation, reading strategy use, and learning attitudes, using a five-point Likert scale to capture perceptions and feedback on the POA model. Interviews and learning journals: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with randomly selected students from the experimental class to capture authentic learning experiences, while learning journals provided supplementary qualitative data. Classroom observations: Conducted by the researcher and teaching assistants to monitor student participation, interaction, and output performance, offering objective evidence of instructional effectiveness. For data analysis, quantitative data were processed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, independent-sample t-tests, and paired-sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-test performance between groups. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, coding student reflections to identify typical patterns in learning motivation, participation, and output ability. By employing diverse research methods and tools, this study sought to triangulate findings between macro-level data and micro-level case insights, thereby ensuring the reliability and validity of the conclusions[10].

### 4. Teaching Practice

#### 4.1 Teaching Scheme Design

The teaching scheme in this study followed the fundamental principles of the POA cycle—"driving, enabling, and assessing"—and was tailored to the objectives of English major reading courses. Accordingly, a three-stage instructional process was developed: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading[11].

Pre-reading: Output-driven task setting

Before engaging with the target text, the teacher designed output tasks related to the text's theme to stimulate student motivation. For example, prior to reading an academic article on artificial intelligence and social development, students were asked to discuss in groups "the impact of artificial intelligence on future careers" and prepare a short oral presentation. This task guided students to enter the reading phase with specific questions and expression needs, transforming reading from passive information intake into active preparation for output.

*While-reading: Input enabling and strategy guidance*

During reading, the teacher guided students to pursue multi-level understanding with a task-oriented mindset. Students first skimmed the text to grasp its structure and main ideas, then worked in groups to extract and integrate key information. The teacher provided necessary scaffolding, such as logical connectors (e.g., therefore, in contrast, consequently) and academic expressions (e.g., it is widely acknowledged that...; from a critical perspective...). Group discussions encouraged information sharing and perspective exchange, promoting deeper processing. Through this output-oriented input-enabling stage, students accumulated linguistic and cognitive resources needed to accomplish the tasks.

*Post-reading: Output and assessment feedback*

After completing the reading, students engaged in specific output tasks based on the text and group discussions, such as writing a 200-word academic summary, rewriting key arguments, or participating in group debates. Multiple assessment approaches were employed, including teacher feedback, peer review, and self-reflection. Evaluation focused not only on linguistic accuracy and fluency but also on depth of thought, logical coherence, and communicative effectiveness. In this way, "assessment promotes output, and output promotes learning" formed a dynamic cycle. Overall, the teaching scheme embodied the POA philosophy, integrating reading comprehension and output ability through an interconnected design, thereby providing English majors with a complete learning chain of "input-processing-output."

#### 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
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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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