



Implementing of College English Course Based on a Production-Oriented Approach Combined with a Critical Thinking Process to Enhance the English Writing Ability of Non-English Major Students at Xi'an University

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Abstract

Background and Aims: University foreign language education is crucial in China's higher education, holding a significant role in promoting the development of students' knowledge, abilities, and comprehensive qualities. College English, a compulsory foundational course for the majority of non-English majors, plays an irreplaceable role in talent cultivation. The purpose of this research was: (1) to compare students' English writing ability before and after implementing a College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process. (2) to compare the students' satisfaction after implementing the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process with the criterion set at 3.51.

Materials and Methods: In this experimental study, 40 non-English major first-year students (one class) from Xi'an University were investigated. They were derived from the cluster random sampling method. The research instruments were (1) a College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process and its six lesson plans, (2) an English writing ability test paper with a reliability of 0.931, and (3) a student's satisfaction questionnaire with a reliability of 0.792. Data were collected and analyzed by means, standard deviation, t-test for dependent samples, and t-test for one sample.

Results: After implementing College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process in the classroom, the research results were as follows: (1), the student's English writing ability post-test scores ($M=41.08$, $SD=4.41$) were higher than the pretest scores ($M=37.08$, $SD=4.46$) at a statistical significance level of 0.05 ($t=45.61$, $p<.05$). (2) The students' satisfaction ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.63$) with the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process was high level.

Conclusion: The College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process has a significant effect on enhancing the English writing ability of non-English major students at Xi'an University. Students are satisfied with the developed College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process.

Keywords: College English Course; Production- Oriented Approach; Critical Thinking; English Writing Ability; Satisfaction





Introduction

College English Course, an integral part of higher learning, is a required basic course for undergraduate students. Under the guidance of theories of foreign language teaching, College English Courses have main components are knowledge and practical skills of the English language, learning strategies, and intercultural communication. The objective of College English is to develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way, so that in their future studies and career as well as social interactions they will be able to communicate effectively, and at the same time enhance their ability to study independently and improve their general cultural awareness to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges. College English is not only a language course that provides basic knowledge about English, but also a capacity enhancement course that helps students broaden their horizons and learn about different cultures in the world. It not only serves as a tool but also has humanistic values. (*College English Course Requirements*, 2017)

Among all the aspects of English, writing plays a very essential role in college students' English learning, which is one of the most underlying components of a language for the learners. However, it has been widely acknowledged that writing is a difficult part of English learning, and it is also regarded as a weak part by a big circle of college English teachers. College English writing and teaching is still on the way to being satisfied. In college English writing classes, the teaching method is mainly characterized as test-centered and input-based (Wen, 2016). Teachers put much emphasis on the explanation of the writing techniques in model essays during classes and students are required to complete the writing task after class. Due to the limited teaching time and heavy teaching tasks, extensive and intensive reading activities are taken as the focus, whereas no free space is left for writing. As a consequence, students show low learning motivation and fall short of writing and expression competence. Even worse, students care too much about the writing task instead of writing content and still make mistakes, ranging from spelling and grammatical to logical mistakes. The concern on how to improve college students' English writing ability effectively remains a sticking problem.

The production-oriented approach was proposed under such background to overcome the weaknesses of English teaching instruction in China. Professor Wen Qiufang proposed an output-driven hypothesis based on Swain's Output Hypothesis in 2007 and revised the theory as an Output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis in 2014. The Output-driven, input-enabled hypothesis highlighted the role of input as an enabling force while output serves as a motivating force (Wen, 2014). In 2015, the hypothesis was systematized as the "Production-oriented Approach" (POA) and applied to various aspects of English teaching after hence. The production-oriented approach aims to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and classroom learning efficiency.

National Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development Program (2021-2035) states that the long-term development of education should "attach importance to the combination of learning and thinking", "initiate heuristic, inquiry and participant teaching to help students learn to learn", "stimulate students curiosity, develop students' interests and hobbies, and create a good environment for independent thinking, free exploration, and brave innovation". It can be seen that critical thinking is also one of the strategic methods for the long-term development of our country. College English Courses, as an organic part of Chinese higher education, are duty-bound to practice critical thinking in class.

College students not only need to learn English language knowledge and skills but also need to analyze and think about the cultural context of language, as well as the learning process. Students should understand the logical relationship and structure of the materials, as well as synthesize, compare, and analyze the information from different sources, and draw their conclusions to form their viewpoint. On one hand, language is of great importance to critical thinking in any field, because it is indispensable to definition, induction, interpretation, discussion, and evaluation. Therefore, the development of language skills is closely related to critical thinking.





However, there is no causal relationship between them, and a person's English language skills do not necessarily mean that the person can use the language critically. However foreign language learning can be a way to improve students' thinking skills. The activities of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, interpretation, and self-adjustment in college English class are the ways to make use of language resources to form texts and to use language in new ways, not an invisible mental process unrelated to language. On the other hand, the instruction of any subject should help students to apply and reflect on their own experiences so that they can form some new perspectives based on these experiences. Only by paying attention to the relationship between language forms and viewpoints can students master, apply, and construct multiple meanings that can reflect their cultural environment. Therefore, critical thinking in college English classes should enable students to have the will and competency to recognize, analyze, and deeply understand the relationship between language forms and viewpoints.

For these above reasons, aiming at the problems existing in the College English Course for non-English major students in Xi'an University, as a college English teacher, the researcher has realized the necessity of developing a College English Course based on production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking process, improving teaching-learning processes as well as assessment and evaluation to enhance the English writing ability for non-English major students in Xi'an University and to some extent, at the same time to increase the quality of College English Course in Xi'an University.

Research Questions

How is the effectiveness of implementing a College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process to enhance the English writing ability of non-English major students?

Research Objectives

1. To compare the students' English writing ability before and after implementing the developed College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process.
2. To compare the students' satisfaction after implementing the developed College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process with the criterion set at 3.51.

Literature Review

College English course

College English Course, an integral part of higher learning, is not only a language course that provides basic knowledge about English but also a capacity enhancement course that helps students broaden their horizons and learn about different cultures in the world. It not only serves as a tool but also has humanistic values.

The objective of the College English Course is to develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way, so that in their future studies and careers as well as social interactions they will be able to communicate effectively, and at the same time enhance their ability to study independently and improve their general cultural awareness to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges. (College English Course Requirements, 2017)

Institutions of higher learning should set their objectives in the light of their specific circumstances, strive to create favorable conditions, and enable those students who have a relatively



higher English proficiency and stronger capacity for learning to meet the intermediate or advanced requirements.

Therefore, to adapt to the development of the times, social progress, and the needs of learners, college English teaching must undergo a comprehensive and three-dimensional reform. Liu et al (2014) point out four characteristics of college English teaching: Firstly, it covers a broad range of students, as the majority of ordinary undergraduate students in China, apart from English majors, need to study college English. Secondly, it requires a relatively high number of class hours. College English credits generally account for a significant portion of the total student workload, ranging from 12 to 16 credits. Thirdly, it has a significant impact on students' development as it is closely linked to their international perspectives, understanding of cutting-edge world disciplines, and improvement in intercultural communication skills. Finally, college English teaching receives high attention and widespread interest from students, parents, and society.

Currently, college English teaching is expected to demonstrate several new development trends. First, in terms of research focus, it will emphasize learners' English learning needs and emphasize their subjective position. The research focus will shift from language itself, curriculum resources, teaching methods, teaching organization, and teaching techniques to college English learners. Second, in terms of theoretical foundation, college English teaching research will move towards diversified theoretical bases. Relevant theories from fields such as psychology, sociology, management, anthropology, and cultural studies will become solid theoretical support for college English teaching research. Third, the emphasis of research will not only be on language teaching and learning but also on understanding the meaning and culture behind the language. Fourth, there will be a shift from language skill teaching to content teaching in college English instruction. Language is the carrier of content, and without content, language becomes a meaningless combination of symbols. The beauty of language lies in the content it carries. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on teaching language content and culture in college English instruction. Fifth, in terms of research methods, quantitative and qualitative research will gradually merge, and empirical research and mixed research will become essential methods for college English teaching research.

In conclusion, significant reforms and changes are expected in college English teaching and research in the 21st century. The subjects, topics, content, methods, and means of research in college English teaching will all face new transformations. In this major transformation, the study for College English Courses will undoubtedly be an essential component of college English teaching reform.

Production-oriented approach

The production-oriented approach is a foreign language teaching theory for Chinese foreign language learners. As a "localized" foreign language teaching theory, the production-oriented approach absorbs the research results of the second language acquisition theory, namely the "input hypothesis", "output hypothesis" and "interaction hypothesis". It advocates the teaching idea of "learning-using integration", takes the output activity as the driving means and the teaching goal, and takes the input activity as the promoting means. As far as the teaching goal is concerned, it not only takes output as the starting point to motivate the students' learning enthusiasm but also takes output as the goal to apply what they have learned. It focuses on improving the efficiency of college English classroom teaching (Zhang Wenjuan, 2016). It is proposed in the production-oriented approach theory that all activities in the classroom should take "learning happens" as the ultimate goal to achieve effective learning (Wen, 2014).



This theory is used to solve the phenomenon of “separation of learning and application” in foreign language teaching in our country. In classroom teaching, the teacher acts as the leader and students’ learning is the center. Under the guidance of production-oriented approach theory, the teacher completes a series of input and productive tasks and focuses on output results so that effective learning occurs in the teaching method. The production-oriented approach is mainly suitable for middle and advanced-level foreign language learners, that is, teaching students to complete sentences on familiar life topics and to communicate or understand common expressions. Besides, this study is designed to teach college students who meet the language requirements of the production-oriented approach. Therefore, a production-oriented approach can be used as the teaching method of this research.

Critical thinking

For about 100 years, people have been thinking about critical thinking and researching how to teach it. Scholars believe that critical thinking is the ability that one can make a purposeful and reasonable judgment of a certain matter based on some criteria. The study of critical thinking ability in foreign countries started much earlier than in China, and the degree and methods of research are more mature and rich. Under the initiative of some important scholars, critical thinking has aroused great attention in China. At present, the most influential critical thinking models are Delphi Panel’s Two-Dimensional Structure Model, and Paul and Elder’s Three-dimensional Model.

In Delphi Panel’s Two-Dimensional Structure Model, cognitive ability consists of six skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, interpretation, and self-regulation. Interpretation means having the ability to understand the information you are being presented with and being able to communicate the meaning of that information with others. Analysis refers to the ability to connect pieces of information to determine what the intended meaning of the information was meant to represent. Inference means having the ability to understand and recognize what elements you will need to determine an accurate conclusion or hypothesis from the information you have at your disposal. Evaluation means being able to evaluate the credibility of statements or descriptions of a person’s experience, judgment, or opinion to measure the validity of the information being presented. Explanation means having the ability to not only restate information, but add clarity and perspective to the information, so it can be fully understood by anyone you are sharing it with. Self-regulation means having an awareness of your thinking abilities and the elements that you are using to find results. According to the discussion and research of the experts and scholars, the above six aspects of cognitive skills are widely used by researchers for the measurement of critical thinking ability.

Paul and Elder (2006) propose a three-dimensional model based on teaching needs, which includes the standards, the elements, and intellectual traits. The eight thinking elements (purpose, questions, points of view, information, inferences, concepts, implications, and assumptions) are the center of the model and each thinking element must be measured or tested using ten standards (clarity, accuracy, relevance, logicalness, breadth, precision, significance, completeness, fairness, depth). The intellectual traits (eight traits: intellectual humility, intellectual autonomy, intellectual integrity, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance, confidence in intellectual empathy, and fair-mindedness) of a person must be developed as we learn the elements, otherwise efficient mental faculties may become narrow, egoism, and ultimately fruitless. The three-dimensional model has 10 standards, which are convenient for self-evaluation, self-adjustment, and self-improvement of an individual’s thinking ability, and also convenient for evaluating others’ thinking ability.



In summary, in this research, six cognitive skills adopted from Delphi Panel's two-dimensional structure model along with ten standards adopted from Paul and Elder's three-dimensional model are used as the instructional strategy in College English Course teaching to improve the critical thinking ability of non-English major first-year students, and to enhance their English writing ability.

Synthesize the instructional strategy based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process.

According to the production-oriented approach and critical thinking, the teacher divides the various tasks into pre- and post-class activities, reduces study pressure during classroom time, and promotes students' autonomy and critical thinking. It fundamentally changes students' learning attitude from passive learning to active learning, which leads to more efficient and enjoyable learning experiences. The instructional strategy process of a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process consists of three stages: 1) preparing; 2) exploring; and 3) producing. All these stages are mediated by the teacher, whose mediating roles include guiding, designing, and scaffolding in addition to being a facilitator and a consultant. The specific teaching stages are as follows:

For the preparation stage, there are 3 steps.

Step 1: With the critical thinking cognitive skills "explanation" and "interpretation", the teacher describes relevant communicative scenarios. The scene should be communicative and the topic is cognitive challenge. Students interpret the information that is being presented and communicate the meaning of that information to others.

Step 2: Under the guidance of critical thinking standards "relevance", students try out the required productive activity. This is to make students aware of the deficiency of their language in accomplishing the required productive activities and to create a desire for learning and to overcome these deficiencies.

Step 3: With critical thinking cognitive skill "analysis" and critical thinking standards "breadth", "depth" and "significance", the teacher explains the learning objectives and productive activities. It aims to have students know communication and language goals. And make students know the type and content of the productive activities.

For the exploring stage, there are also 3 steps:

Step 4: With critical thinking cognitive skills "interpretation", "analysis", "inference" and "explanation", the teacher explains how the productive tasks are to be accomplished, the enabling materials to be given or to be searched, and what learning objectives are to be achieved. The teacher divides a large productive task into mini-tasks and provides students with enabling materials. Students analyze and connect pieces of information. It helps students to understand the steps to finish the output task and the specific requirements of each step.

Step 5: Under the guidance of critical thinking standards "precision", "clarify", "logicalness" and "fairness", students learn selectively while the teacher gives guidance and checks their learning outcomes. Students make inferences to understand and recognize the content, language form, or discourse structure needed for the output task from the input.

Step 6: Under the guidance of critical thinking standards "accuracy", "breadth" and "depth", students practice a mini-productive task once they finish their selective learning of the given materials. It prompts students to use what they have just learned from the given materials to accomplish their productive tasks.

For the producing stage, there are 4 steps:

Step 7: Under the guidance of critical thinking standards “completeness” students practice unit projects.

Step 8: Students submit their products to the teacher.

Step 9: The teacher and students set up evaluation criteria together. The criteria should be clear, relevant, logical, easy to understand and check. After that, the teacher and students evaluate the typical products collaboratively in class.

Step 10: The teacher and students evaluate the remaining products after class. The teacher and students participated in the evaluation together, and the output results submitted by students are taken as the basis of formative evaluation.

For steps 9 and step 10, the critical thinking cognitive skills used are “self-regulation”, “evaluation” and “inference”.

English writing ability

“Writing is best thought of as a process of thinking on paper about a topic”, which indicates that writing is one of the five language skills reflecting learners’ thoughts and attitudes towards something and it also reflects students’ language competence, especially their expressive competence. Therefore, English writing can not only strengthen learners’ acquired knowledge before but also improve students’ language skills and writing competence.

The instructional strategy process of a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process consists of three phases. In the first preparation phase, students learn ideas, language, and discourse structure from the given input materials. Making students express their ideas first can develop their critical thinking abilities and increase students’ writing materials. Then, in the exploring phase, students can get some benefits from proper language material to finish effective writing tasks. Last, the discourse structure of the input is very essential for students because it can help students arrange their ideas and structure them into a decent and logical passage. Critical thinking in English writing practice enables students to be willing to accept different opinions, prevents them from falling into routine thinking, and helps them to be able to view and argue problems from various perspectives.

In conclusion, after learning through a College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process, non-English major students at Xi’an University should achieve the intermediate requirements for English writing ability set by College English Course Requirements.

Research Conceptual Framework

The research was designed as the conceptual framework as follows:

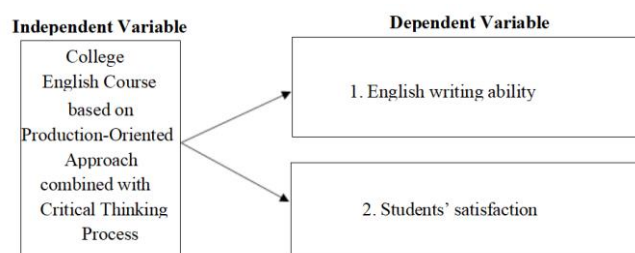


Figure 1 Research conceptual framework



Methodology

1. Population and sample: The population in this study was about 1100 non-English major first-year students (30 classrooms) at the undergraduate level at Xi'an University, China. The sample of this study was 1 classroom (40 students/classroom) of non-English major first-year students studying in the first semester of the 2023 academic year at Xi'an University, which was derived by cluster random sampling.

2. Research Instruments: The research instruments which were used in this study were:

2.1 College English Course based on Production-oriented Approach Combined with Critical Thinking Process: The course based on production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking process includes six components: 1) principles, 2) objectives, 3) content, 4) instructional strategy, 5) media and resources, and 6) assessment and evaluation. Five experts evaluated the draft course, and the 11 items of the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process reviewed by five experts. It was obtained that the lowest Mean score was 3.80 and SD was 0.45, and the highest Mean score was 4.80 and SD was 0.45. The Mean total was 4.56, and the SD total was 0.52, which was statistically significant. It was revealed that the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process was very high level and could be used. (Henderson, J. C., & Sifonis, J. G., 1988)

2.2 6 lesson plans for the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process: five experts evaluated the six lesson plans. According to the expert evaluation form, the lowest Mean score was 4.39(SD=0.59), and the highest Mean score was 4.57(SD=0.52). The analysis results showed that lesson plans of the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process met the requirements of enhancing English writing ability for non-English major students and could be used in the teaching of the College English Course. (Henderson, J. C., & Sifonis, J. G., 1988)

2.3 English writing test paper: The test consisted of 4 parts. For parts I and II, students are supposed to read the data in a chart and write a 120-word report. For parts III and IV, students are supposed to write a 180-word essay to express their opinions on the given topic. The item discrimination (r) of this draft test ranged from 84-.96, item difficulty ranged from 65-.71 and reliability was at 0.931. It means the test was qualified and can be used to collect data. (Cronbach, 1951)

2.4 Students' satisfaction questionnaire: The questionnaire is provided to 5 experts for content validity check and suggestions. The quality of the questionnaire is considered according to the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) obtained from the achievement test evaluation form. The item index of congruence of each item(0.8-1.0) is greater than 0.50. The result of analyzing the IOC index showed that all items were appropriate and could be used in the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the reliability of the students' satisfaction questionnaire is 0.792, which is higher than 0.70. therefore, the reliability of the students' satisfaction questionnaire meets the requirements. (Cronbach, 1951)

3. Data collection: The course was implemented in the samples in the first semester of the 2023 academic year. The procedures of data collection during course implementation process were as follows:

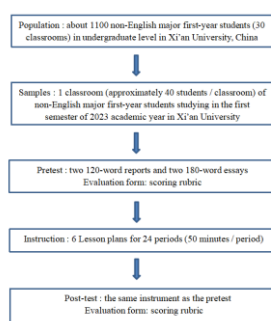


Figure 2 The procedural framework of course implementation

4. Data analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed by using the statistical program in line with the research objectives. (1) Statistics used to determine the different significance at .05 level of scores on English writing ability before and after implementing College English Courses based on a production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking process by using t-test for dependent samples. (2) Statistics used to assess the students' satisfaction toward College English Courses based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process by using arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and t-test for one sample.

Results:

According to the research objectives, the results were as follows:

1. Result of comparing the English writing ability of students before and after implementing College English Courses based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process by using t-test for dependent samples.

Table 1 Result of comparing the different scores of English writing

Group	Full scores	n	Pre-test scores		Post-test scores		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Experimental group	60	40	37.08	4.46	41.08	4.41	45.61**	0.001

* The significance level: $p < .01$

As presented in Table 1, for the pretest, the *mean* score was 37.08 ($SD=4.46$) and for the post-test, the *mean* score was 41.08 ($SD=4.41$). The result of this table showed that after learning through a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process in the classroom, the post-test score of English writing was 4.00 higher than the pretest scores. Then, $t=45.61$, $p=0.001 < 0.01$, indicating that students' English writing ability has been greatly improved after the production-oriented approach combined with the critical thinking process was adopted in the College English Course.

1. Assess the students' satisfaction with the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process.



Table 2 Mean score and satisfaction level of students satisfaction about College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process

Question number of satisfaction questionnaire		M	SD	Satisfaction level
Aspect	Question item			
Teaching objectives	1. Satisfaction with whether the teaching objectives of the College English Course are clear and precise	4.28	0.68	High level
	2. Satisfaction with the clarity of the teaching objectives of the College English Course	4.38	0.63	High level
	3. Satisfaction with the teaching objectives of the College English Course meeting the requirements of improving English writing ability	4.50	0.64	High level
Teaching content	4. Satisfaction with whether the teaching content of the College English Course is clear and precise	4.40	0.67	High level
	5. Satisfaction with the clarity of the teaching content of the College English Course	4.53	0.55	Very high level
	6. Satisfaction with the teaching content of the College English Course meeting the requirements of improving English writing ability	4.43	0.67	High level
	7. Satisfaction with the difficulty of the teaching content of the College English Course	4.35	0.66	High level
Teaching instructional strategy	8. Satisfaction with the effective communication between teachers and students in the College English Course	4.48	0.60	High level
	9. Satisfaction with the design of the teaching process in the College English Course	4.50	0.60	High level
	10. Satisfaction with the teaching approach (production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking process) of the College English Course to improve the class atmosphere	4.43	0.67	High level
	11. Satisfaction with the teaching approach of the College English Course to improve students' English writing ability	4.50	0.60	High level
	12. Satisfaction with the distribution of lessons in the college English classes	4.40	0.63	High level
	13. Satisfaction with the combination of teaching resources and media to promote students' interest in English writing	4.53	0.55	Very high level
Media and resources	14. Satisfaction with the combination of teaching resources and media to improve students' English writing ability	4.35	0.70	High level
	15. Satisfaction with the combination of teaching resources and media used in the College English Course	4.40	0.63	High level
Assessment and evaluation	16. Satisfaction with the level of difficulty of assignments in the College English Course	4.42	0.59	High level
	17. Satisfaction with the effectiveness of the assessment system	4.48	0.55	High level



Question number of satisfaction questionnaire		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Satisfaction level
Aspect	Question item			
	18. The assessment system can differentiate students' English writing ability in the College English Course	4.58	0.64	Very high level
Total / Overall		4.44	0.63	High level

As presented in Table 2, in the 18 items of the satisfaction questionnaire, the lowest Mean score was 4.28 (SD = 0.63), and the highest Mean score was 4.58 (SD = 0.64). The Mean total was 4.44, SD total was 0.63. The result of Table 2 showed that the student's satisfaction with the College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process was high level.

Discussion

The College English Course based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process can enhance the English writing ability of non-English major students at Xi'an University. This may be due to the following four reasons:

1. The instructional strategy based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process enhanced students' autonomous learning abilities, and the immediate feedback also improved their learning efficiency.

2. The exploring part in the production-oriented approach combined with the critical thinking process can better motivate students' learning desire and study enthusiasm. The "output-driven hypothesis" is not only the driving force of language learning but also the objective of language learning. In the process of finishing the productive tasks, students realized their deficiency of language accumulation, and they felt the importance of productive tasks to communicative value in future workplace. As long as students noticed the significance of productive tasks and their insufficient language ability, they were engaged in the input learning part more actively to finish the productive tasks.

3. Different forms of writing assessment helped students modify and perfect compositions by themselves, which improved their writing confidence and enthusiasm. The whole assessing process includes in-class and after-class activities, and it combines the teacher's scaffolding role with the involvement of the whole class. The whole assessment model promoted students' discussion and communication in class, which helped them to learn from each other. Through the improvement and perfecting process, students strengthened their confidence and learning enthusiasm.

Students paid more attention to the critical thinking process. They developed their ability actively and had the concept of questioning. They didn't follow all the things without thinking. They learned to think actively and to practice the ability of analysis, inference, and evaluation.

Through a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process, students' satisfaction is improved. This may be due to the following two reasons:

1. The relationship between students and teachers is explicit, and teachers' scaffolding function and students' independent learning are balanced. The production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process advocates a "learning-centered principle", that is to way, all of the teaching activities in class must serve the teaching objective and effective learning. As long as students can learn something, it doesn't matter who is the center, or who is in the leading role, that's only the appearance,



not the essence of education. The production-oriented approach combined with the critical thinking process emphasizes the cooperation and co-construction teaching process under the guidance of teachers' leading role, and teachers should make full use of the limited time for students' efficient learning. From productive tasks' design and input materials' selection to students' selective learning instruction and products' assessment, every step of the teaching process needs teachers' scaffolding function. Along with teaching steps get further and students' abilities get better, teachers withdraw the scaffold function to let students play their autonomy and self-motivation role.

2. College English Courses based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process pay more attention to the "learning-using integrated principle", which advocates that in classroom teaching, all of the language teaching activities are firmly associated with application in real life. In other words, learning and using are integrated without boundaries, and students treat texts as a means of accomplishing productive tasks. In such a way, students use English to do things, which is a good way to develop students' comprehensive abilities including critical thinking ability, autonomous learning abilities, and cultural literacy.

Conclusion

The researcher developed and assessed the College English Course at Xi'an University, employing a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process. Drawing insights from literature reviews, interviews, and expert evaluations, the course structure was meticulously crafted, encompassing principles, objectives, content, instructional strategies, media and resources, and assessment and evaluation woven into the instruction across ten steps. The course, comprising six units spanning diverse themes encompassed 24 periods aimed at enhancing English writing ability. With 40 non-English major first-year students participating, English writing ability was assessed using pre-and post-tests, revealing significant improvements post-intervention.

In this study, SPSS software was used to evaluate the students' satisfaction with College English Courses based on a production-oriented approach combined with a critical thinking process. The finding of comparison of students' satisfaction after learning through the developed College English Course showed that students' satisfaction was higher than the determined criterion of 70% at .05 levels of statistical significance.

This study underscores the effectiveness and feasibility of implementing a College English Course at Xi'an University, offering a promising avenue for teachers to conduct comprehensive evaluations and for students to develop robust English writing ability, nurturing independent learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Recommendation

1. Recommendations for policymaking

1) In alignment with the production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking processes, the director and school administrators should prioritize course development and encourage teachers to acquire expertise in designing courses. This can be achieved by allocating budgetary support for the creation of instructional materials. Additionally, teachers should undergo training in developing instructional materials and mastering learning management techniques in the classroom, including the implementation of a diverse range of instructional activities.

2) The director or school administrators should organize workshops for teachers aimed at enhancing their knowledge and understanding of learner-centered approaches, course development

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Citation



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strategies, instructional techniques, and assessment and evaluation methodologies. Special emphasis should be placed on authentic assessment methods to enable teachers to effectively gauge student learning outcomes. Through these initiatives, teachers will be better equipped to implement a production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking processes, thereby fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment.

2. Recommendations for applying the results of this research

1) Update or revise existing curriculum frameworks to incorporate elements of the production-oriented approach combined with critical thinking processes identified in the study. Ensure alignment with educational standards and learning objectives.

2) Develop or adapt instructional materials that facilitate the implementation of production-oriented tasks and critical thinking activities in the classroom. Provide resources such as lesson plans, activity guides, and multimedia materials to support teachers' efforts.

3) Revise assessment methods to align with the objectives of the production-oriented approach combined with the critical thinking process. Implement authentic assessment strategies that evaluate students' ability to apply language ability in real-world contexts.

4) Offer additional support services or resources to students to foster their engagement and success in production-oriented tasks. Encourage collaborative learning experiences and provide opportunities for peer feedback and reflection.

5) Share the findings of the study with other educators, researchers, and policymakers through conferences, publications, or professional networks. Foster collaboration with other institutions or organizations interested in implementing similar approaches.

3. Recommendations for further research study

1) When other researchers intend to use this paper to develop a course, they should be aware of the process of curriculum development that consists of six steps: constructing principles, formulating objectives, selecting content, constructing instructional strategies, choosing media and resources, and constructing assessment and evaluations. When constructing principles, it is necessary to collect information on national policies, social needs, and students' needs, collect problems and deficiencies of current courses, and formulate teaching objectives according to the above needs. Study the teaching philosophy theory in line with the science and characteristics of the curriculum, select appropriate teaching methods, compile or select the teaching materials that can achieve the objectives and teaching methods, and collect vivid resources through the network resources to assist the teaching. According to the teaching objectives, appropriate and adequate assessment methods are constructed.

2) Referring to the teaching instructional strategy, researchers should pay attention to output tasks which should be reasonable, practical, and measurable. It is expected that teachers should design an output scenario that is likely to happen in the future to motivate students to learn from the input. Besides, the assessment and evaluation criterion for the output task should be clear enough so that both the teacher and students can know whether the teaching objectives have been achieved. The input material should be selected carefully to serve the needs of the output task. It is believed that the material in the textbook can be used as the input material, but supplementary materials should be given if the material in the textbook is not sufficient to finish the output task. For example, it is suggested that the teacher use students' excellent works as the input material of organization for the reason that the input material in the textbook can sometimes be difficult for students to imitate. However, it's noteworthy that input



material from the organization can be helpful at the initial stage and the teacher should encourage students to use personalized organization later.

3) Referring to the teaching process, teachers are supposed to design the teaching procedure carefully and allocate proper time to each step. Teachers should divide the output task into several parts and help students finish the sub-tasks one by one. Therefore, the output task will be finished without giving students too much stress, which is beneficial to the achievement of the teaching objective. Teachers should play the leading role in the teaching process to ensure students' effective learning. Teachers are supposed to enable students to know how to do selective learning during the teaching process and also to check the results of students' selective learning. Besides, teachers ought to select typical works of students for the assessment and evaluation in the teaching process and help students to know about their problems and to avoid making the same mistakes. However, what's noteworthy is that teachers should consciously reduce their role in the teaching process gradually and at the same time enhance students' sense of responsibility for learning step by step.

4) Different kinds of writing topics should be used to investigate students' writing abilities. From more compositions to analysis of their writing ability as well as the critical thinking ability used in the composition. More teachers should join to grade the writings in further research to make the grade more objective and accurate.

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