

# Research on the Application of Action-Oriented Teaching Method to College English Class in Higher Vocational College

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**ABSTRACT.** *Traditional teaching method is unable to meet the requirement of cultivating talents with comprehensive competence in higher vocational college. Action-oriented teaching method from Germany is not only a teaching method, but also a kind of new belief of vocational education. In recent years, there have been researches on the application of AOTM at home. However, studies on the application of AOTM to college English class in higher vocational college are rare. Therefore, the present study analyzes the whole situation of the application of AOTM to college English class in higher vocational college, trying to find out what problems exist, what difficulties the teacher are faced with, and what the reasons are in a hope of offering some suggestions to promote and apply this teaching method efficiently in the future.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Action-oriented teaching method, College english teaching, Application, Research*

## 1. Introduction

The College English Teaching Requirement (CETR) of higher vocational college states “The goal of college English teaching is to develop students’ ability in applying language; the teaching content should be practical and relevant; the two principles of practicability and sufficiency should be followed” (Ministry of Education P.R.C.2006). It is obvious that the English teaching in higher vocational college (HVC will be used as the short form in the following parts) at present can not meet this requirement. It is an urgent task for us to research on a new teaching methodology, to optimize the allocation of teaching resources and to promote the continuous development of English teaching. Surely, a lot of scholars and experts have undertaken this responsibility to ponder and study the English teaching in HVC. Reform and creation of talents cultivation mode in HVC is being promoted all around the country.

In order to meet the enlargement of the needs for talents in various careers and

fields in recent years, higher vocational college have paid more attention to cultivating the technique and applied talents with working abilities. College English, as one of the important compulsory courses in HVC, is taught as a language which is widely used in international communication and in many kinds of scientific subjects. It also plays a vital role in developing students' comprehensive qualities and practical capability of English. However, there are a series of problems in college English teaching in HVC. First of all, students' English level is rather weak. The students in HVC are characterized as passive, dependent and lacking in initiative. Most of them usually are not active in study and do not have good habit of English learning. Actually such a learning level can not meet the requirement of the future employment. Furthermore, course design and teaching materials in HVC are not so suitable for college students. Meanwhile, college English teaching in HVC tends to get in such a vicious cycle in which students are suffering from learning and teachers are tired of teaching. Hence, college English teaching efficiency is quite low.

Under this background, action-oriented teaching method, which was born in Germany, was introduced into China. AOTM can not only help to develop students' interest and cultivate students' comprehensive competence, but also be suitable for the curricular system of higher vocational college. It holds individual advantages in cultivating technique and applied talents as well as improving the general quality and level of English teaching in HVC as a whole. Therefore, since it was introduced into China in 1990s, AOTM has been adopted and applied by many higher vocational colleges to a wide range of fields and subjects, including those colleges in Guangxi, of course. Although it has been proved efficient by many studies both at home and abroad, that many advantages have been brought in English classes by applying AOTM, there are still many problems in implementing this kind of teaching method due to some reasons. Based on a survey of 50 teachers in three higher vocational colleges in Nanning, Guangxi and the interview to some of them, this thesis will make a study of the situation of applying the AOTM in HVC at present, trying to find out what problems exist, what difficulties the teacher are faced with, and what the reasons are. Then the author will give some suggestions to solve these problems.

## **2. Methodology**

This study aims to survey the general situation of the application of AOTM in higher vocational college, and to find out the problems of its implementation. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used to address the research questions listed in chapter one. The author conducts a questionnaire survey and analyzes the data with SPSS17.0 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences 17.0). Besides, the author also conducts interviews to support the quantitative data analysis by using some open-ends questions.

### **2.1 Subjects**

The subjects of present study are college English teachers of higher vocational colleges. In order to get the clear picture of the situation of the application of AOTM to college English class in higher vocational college, in May 2013, 50 college English teachers were randomly selected from 3 higher vocational colleges in Nanning City, Guangxi to complete a questionnaire. To be specific, 20 participants are from Guangxi Agriculture Vocational College, 17 participants from Guangxi Vocational College, and 13 participants from Nanning Vocational College. Table 3-1 shows the distribution of questionnaires in three colleges. After collection, all of questionnaires were found to be valid.

*Table 3 -1 Distribution of Questionnaires*

Colleges	Questionnaires distributed	Percent%
Guangxi Agriculture Vocational College	20	40
Guangxi Vocational College	17	34
Nanning Vocational College	13	26
Total	50	100

## **2.2 Instruments**

The instruments used in this study include one questionnaire and face-to-face interviews with the teachers. Questionnaire of Application of Action-oriented Teaching Method to College English Class in Higher Vocational College (see Appendix 1) is used in this study. In order to avoid language barrier, all questions are written in Chinese. With SPSS17.0, for all these question items, the result of this liability scale of the questionnaire is 0.795, which is of high inner reliability (>0.7). Therefore, this questionnaire can be used in this paper to collect data and further analysis can be carried out.

### **2.2.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire takes reference to Cui Qian's master thesis questionnaire (2010) and adds Wang Ronglan's idea in her master's thesis questionnaire from Hebei Normal University (2011). The questionnaire in the present study contains two parts. The first part consists 8 multiple choice questions which aims to get teachers' personal background information including working time, education background, training experience, teaching objectives, teaching content, detail teaching methods of AOT, teaching evaluations, learner's characteristic. Besides, there are 7 items of questions that have more than one choice to obtain the situation of applying AOTM. The second part consists of totally 17 items and it is mainly divided into 6 dimensions, namely: teachers' understanding and using frequency of AOT (Item 16, 17); situation of the teaching objectives (Item 18, 19, 20); situation of the teaching design and organization (Item 21, 22); situation of the teaching evaluations (Item 28); situation of the teaching facilities and school management as to the AOTM (Item 23, 24, 25, 26); the effect of application of AOTM in college English class in HVC

(Item 29, 30, 31, 32).

The items in the second part of questionnaire are standard Likert-scale in five-point ranging from “1=strongly disagree” (1 point) to “5=strongly agree” (5 points). For each item, if a teacher chooses “strongly disagree”, he or she will get 1 point; if chooses “disagree”, 2 points; if chooses “neither agree nor disagree”, 3 points; if chooses “agree”, 4 points; and if chooses “strongly agree”, then 5 points. In this way, the raw data for every item can be gained. All the raw data in the quantitative research will be put into the software of SPSS17.0 and be analyzed with its help; results will be described in the following chapter.

### **2.2.2 Interviews**

Following the questionnaire investigation, interviews for English teachers are conducted to gain the qualitative data. In order to get more details information and make further exploration to the applying situation of AOTM to college English class of higher vocational college, about 10 teachers are selected at random to take interviews hoping that the results can support the former questionnaire investigation. These interviews deal with some issues closely related to the questionnaire, such as the teachers' understanding and using frequency of AOTM; teaching objectives; teaching evaluation; school management; the problem or difficulty when applying AOTM and so on in order that we can find the reasons why they make certain choices in the questionnaire investigation. The face-to-face interviews are mainly carried out in the meeting room of those colleges after their weekly meeting in the afternoon. Then the author takes detailed notes of all the interviews and translates them into English. The interviews questions can be seen in Appendix 2.

## **2.3 Data**

### **2.3.1 Data Collection**

It took the author about two weeks to finish the questionnaire investigation with all the teachers' cooperation. Totally 50 questionnaires were distributed to the college English teachers in three higher vocational colleges in Nanning, Guangxi. Before the teachers filling out the questionnaire, the author explained to them that this questionnaire was used to find out the situation of the AOTM applying in college English class of higher vocational college in order to find out the problems existing and the way of solution and improvement. There was no right or wrong answers to all the items in questionnaires. Later, all the questionnaires were collected and all were found to be valid. Then, all the data of the questionnaires were processed by SPSS17.0. And these quantitative data would be analyzed and discussed in the next chapter.

The interviews for the teachers are made face to face one by one and the interviewees talked freely about the related topics the author prepared in advance. Both notes and tape-recorder were used as instrument to take down the interviewees' words as evidence to supply the findings from the quantitative data.

### **2.3.2 Data Analysis**

By using the SPSS17.0, all the data in the quantitative research will be analyzed. And the results of the analysis will be listed as tables to illustrate the situation of applying AOTM in English class of higher vocational college. Data analysis will be conducted in three ways as follows:

Firstly, descriptive statistics analysis is made to examine general situation of the AOTM applying to college English class in higher vocational college, means and percent will be used to analyze each item of in the second part of questionnaire which are standard Likert-scale.

Secondly, the percent, and cumulative percent of the items with more than one choice in the first part of questionnaire were calculated by the way of dichotomy group tabulated at value 1 to get a specific picture of the situation of applying AOTM to college English class in higher vocational college.

Thirdly, the main points of interviews will also be demonstrated one by one as qualitative data to supply the findings from the quantitative data.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

In this chapter, data obtained from the questionnaire will be presented and the two research questions will be discussed in relation to the results of the statistical analysis. For the quantitative data, statistical procedures are computed by the SPSS 17.0. The qualitative data will be used as the supplement for the quantitative data; some notes obtained from interviews will be listed for discussion and analysis.

### **3.1 Overall Situation Of Application Of The Aotm To College English Class In Higher Vocational College**

The first research question of the study addresses the general situation of application of the AOTM to college English class in higher vocational college, and then the following seven parts mainly deal with this question.

### **3.2 Problems Existing in the Application of Aotm to College English Class**

There must be a long period of time before a new teaching idea or method would be recognized, accepted and applied to teaching, during which there will be a lot of problems and difficulties. According to the data analysis in the last part and the results of interview, we find that the implementation of AOTM to college English class in HVC has encountered many difficulties and problems. Here are some general opinions of the interviewees as to the question: *What difficulties are there in the implementation and promotion of AOTM?*

“Teachers’ teaching belief has not been changed, they are lacking of advanced knowledge of teaching design.”

“Due to the heavy load of working, many teachers are lack of time for the research. It is limited to improve teachers’ teaching level.”

“The existing teaching materials are not suitable for AOTM.”

“The existing teaching facilities and conditions can not meet the need of AOTM.”

“School leaders do not pay enough attention to the AOTM. Teachers are lack of incentives and motivation.”

“Teaching management and teaching evaluation system fail to meet the requirements of AOTM.”

“Students’ learning habits and level do not meet the requirements of AOTM.”

“It is difficult to control the teaching process.”

After sorting and classifying, we’ll make a conclusion of the problems and difficulties of implementation and promotion of AOTM in college English teaching in 7 aspects in the following part.

#### **4. Implications of the Study**

In this chapter, some suggestions will be put forward on the existing problems explored above in Chapter 4 in line with the author’s understanding and teaching experience.

- 1).Setting Obtainable Goals from Different Angles
- 2).Building More Language Labs and Multimedia Classrooms
- 3).Strengthening the Construction of Students’ Training Base
- 4).Enhancing Training the Belief of AOTM on Teachers
- 5).Strengthening Teachers’ Teaching Capability
- 6).Strengthening Teachers’ Professional Skills
- 7).Strengthening Teachers’ Psychology Knowledge
- 8).Improving School Leaders’ Understanding of Teaching Philosophy
- 9).Controlling the Number of Students
- 10).Reforming the Teaching Evaluation Mechanism
- 11).Developing School-Based Teaching Materials
- 12).Teaching According to Learners’ Individual Differences

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