The Application of Production-oriented Approach Assessment in Senior High School English Reading Teaching

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Abstract: Some scholars have applied POA to high school English classes and used comparative experimental data to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, but few have analyzed and evaluated its application of assessment in high school English reading classes in detail. The research adopted qualitative study and action research. The study found that in the immediate assessment, understanding and analyzing questions and critical feedback were more frequent. Creating questions and process-focused feedback were limited. In the delayed assessment, there was a high degree of students’ participation, and multiple assessments of group discussion, teachers’ demonstration of revision, peer assessment enabled students to deepen their understanding of the assessment criteria and improve their output. Based on the results of the study, this paper provides suggestions on the application of the POA assessment to high school English reading teaching: in the immediate assessment, the number of high-cognitive questions (evaluating and creating questions), the scaffolded feedback in task-focused feedback and process-focused feedback should be increased. In the delayed assessment, guided marking can be implemented. The time for group discussion and teacher’s demonstration of revision can be appropriately increased, and teachers should not be absent in the post-class peer assessment session, who are obliged to provide timely scaffolding for the students.

Keywords: Production-oriented approach, Assessment, Senior high school English reading.

1. Introduction

In China where students learn English as a second language, English reading courses of senior high school can not only help students accumulate vocabulary, get familiar with phrases and sentence patterns, serving as an essential link for cultivating students’ comprehensive language ability and intercultural communication ability (Luo, 2021), but also create favorable environment for them to absorb knowledge of other subjects, have a glimpse of the world and spread traditional Chinese culture. Consequently, they provide more opportunities for students to continue to learn English or choose a career in the future. However, at present, there are some problems in senior high school English reading classes.

To begin with, traditional teaching method of English reading takes “reading” as the purpose, hoping to promote output through a large amount of input. However, due to the low teaching efficiency of this method, students fail to master and accumulate effective reading strategies so that their progress is limited (Zhao, 2021). What’s more, due to the difficulty of some contents in the reading materials, they fail to meet the students’ “Zone of Proximal Development”. Some teachers usually explain the reading materials word by word. The teaching in reading class is all about word, grammar explanation and discourse analysis. Developing students’ integrated language capability is almost impossible. In addition, the model of curriculum evaluation is relatively monotonous, which also restricts the teaching effect. In reading classes, although a large number of inputs can promote the output to a certain extent, the means of evaluation input is examination oriented, that is, the students’ understanding of the text can be tested only by questions (Cui, 2021). Plenty of research has proven that POA can be an effective solution to these problems.

Nevertheless, there was little research concerning the application of POA assessment in reading classes in senior high school. Therefore, this paper will emphasize the assessing part of POA from the perspective of formative assessment, adopting qualitative and action research method, to reveal multiple evaluation methods used and give advice on teaching for better applying POA assessment to senior high school English reading classes.

This paper aims to perfect POA theory, incorporating the measures of formative assessment, facilitate teachers to apply POA assessment to senior high school English classes, put forward suggestions for immediate assessment and delayed assessment, assist teachers and students in evaluating in multiple ways so as to better apply POA assessment to senior high school English classes. The ultimate goal is to enhance mutual understanding between teachers and students, increase the degree of the interaction in class, help students gain a deeper understanding of the reading material, arouse their reading interest, improve language competence, adopt appropriate reading strategies, develop their reading ability, communicative competence, creativity, team spirit, cultivate high-order thinking and promote autonomous learning.

Furthermore, this paper is willing to draw people’s attention to the significance of assessment and the feasibility of promoting learning through assessment, which is the goal of POA as well.

2. Research Procedure

Research subjects are 8 videos of high-quality reading classes in Weihai No.1 senior high school which include a description of delayed evaluation in an onsite reading class. Reading materials of these classes are mainly novels or stories. Each class is 50 minutes or so. There are 5 teachers in total. There are about 60 students in one class.
As for the immediate assessment, the observer records, analyzes and studies the teaching situation in the class, observes and transcribes 7 reading classes, divides the immediate assessment into different types, and records the frequency of different types of assessment during or after the English reading class through NVivo12. According to Anderson and other professors, questions brought out by teachers can be divided into five types: remembering questions (retrieving, recalling, or recognizing knowledge from memory), understanding questions (constructing meaning from different types of functions, written or graphic messages, or activities like interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing and explaining), analyzing questions (breaking material or concepts into parts, determining how the parts relate or interrelate to one another or to an overall structure or purpose), evaluating questions (making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing), creating questions (putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating) (Anderson, L. W., Krathwohl, D. R., Airasian, P.W., et al, 2009)

According to Kluger & DeNisi, teachers’ declarative feedback in the video can be divided into critical feedback, feedback that focuses on tasks and feedback that focuses on procedure (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

As for the delayed assessment, according to action research: to begin with, the researcher found out the lack of delayed assessment in the former high-quality classes through the recorded videos. Then, the researcher and teacher found out the most suitable writing task after one reading class and implemented the delayed assessment of POA. The researcher observed and recorded the onsite class in the eighth video, evaluated and analyzed the delayed assessment of a particular reading class. Certain suggestions will be given as well in the process.

3. Major Findings of the Research

In the immediate assessment of POA, there are five types in the questions put forward by teachers including understanding questions, analyzing questions, remembering questions, evaluating questions and creating questions. A high percentage (46.30%) can be found in understanding questions, which is followed by analyzing questions (24.07%). It proves that teachers lay stress on cultivating students’ ability of comprehension and analysis. By contrast, a low proportion of creating questions (1.85%) is presented, which illustrates that teachers overlook the cultivation of students’ imagination. There are three types of declarative sentences posed by teachers including critical feedback, feedback that focuses on tasks and feedback that focuses on procedure. Critical feedback took up the highest proportion, at up to 70.37%, which demonstrates that teachers are willing to give immediate encouragement after students’ answers. The figure for tasks and procedure focused feedback is relatively small. The latter two kinds of feedback require teachers to be proficient in English who have also obtained certain strategies for English reading as second language learners themselves.

In terms of delayed assessment of POA, it enhances students’ participation in that there are more activities for them to voice their opinions. Group discussion, teachers’ demonstration of revision, peer assessment are about the same topic of the writing so students are able to view their output from different perspectives. Also, this meaningful varied repetition facilitates the expansion of depth and breadth of thought, and helps the processing results to enter long term memory (Wen, 2016), hence promoting learning through evaluating.

4. Implication of Immediate Assessment

4.1 Questions Posed by Teachers

In the experiment, teachers used more low cognitive questions (remembering questions and understanding questions), which were easier to answer. However, the number of high cognitive questions (evaluating questions and creating questions) was relatively small. High cognitive questions are more effective in promoting learning and they are positively correlated with the following indicators: on-task behaviour, length of student responses, the number of relevant contributions, students’ use of complete sentences, critical thinking and relevant questions asked by students (Bloom, 1956). Hence, teachers can add more high cognitive questions in the immediate assessment to increase vitality in class and promote students’ critical thinking and communication skills, so as to better meet the expectations of POA for the classes, students and teachers.

4.2 Declarative Sentences Put Forward by Teachers

4.2.1 Critical feedback

In critical feedback, “very good”, “good job” were widely used, and they rarely involved information related to the task, which hardly promoted students to better understand the task and improved their learning performance. Therefore, the effect of teachers’ praise in videos was not great. If details of students’ thinking and language skills can be carefully evaluated, then such critical feedback not only plays a supporting role in improving students’ self-efficacy, but also promotes students to complete tasks (Luo, et al. 2014).

4.2.2 Feedback that focuses on tasks

In the feedback focusing on tasks, Scaffolded feedback can be added. Scaffolded feedback is positioned and provided within the zone of proximal development where it consists of a form of mediation aligned with learners’ merging capabilities. It is salient and noticeable to learners as it explicitly involves learners in correcting their output. In line with Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis, Scaffolded feedback is more effective than recasting in that it leads learners to better notice and concentrate on target forms in the current study (Rassaei, 2014).

4.2.3 Feedback that focuses on procedure

Feedback that focuses on procedure can improve students’ self-confidence and self-efficacy in completing tasks, and further promote students to find more effective information and strategies to complete tasks (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Thus, the feedback that focuses on procedure can be...
appropriately increased to equip students with more cognitive strategies in reading (which involved mental manipulation or transformation of materials or tasks) (O’Malley, J&Chamot, A, 1990) and hence comprehension.

5. Implication of Delayed Assessment

5.1 Pre-class Preparation

According to Sadler, students need to develop understandings of assessment standards through engaging in activities that replicate the experiences of the marker (Salder, 1989, 2009, 2010).

In preparation activities, guided marking is a widely used strategy. It aims to help students explore and gain an understanding of teacher’s expectations and standards. Students read a range of written work from previous year or view recorded presentations. Guided marking is organized in a seminar or lecture where students articulate their judgments before students do their assignments. So the experience of reading and discussing the previous written work helps them to understand teacher’s expectations (McConlogue, 2020).

Thus, rather than solely explaining the criteria to students, teachers can offer students assessment guidelines and three previous year’s writing exemplars (from a task behind the reading text). After that, teachers can give them enough time to read, rank and make comments in a workshop, encouraging them to compare the writing exemplars with the reading text, practice writing constructive feedback on these examples and discussing what feedback students find helpful and why. This activity helps students better understand what good-quality essay looks like and standards of the writing task.

5.2 In-class Activities

This is Sadler’s view on discussion of assessment in classrooms: group discussion on the quality of the work helps students develop an understanding of standards and interpretation of assessment criteria. The overt aim is to shift the focus away from telling students about the quality of their work (disclosure) and towards having them see and understand the reasons for quality (visibility) and in the process develop personal capability in making complex judgments (Sadler, 2010).

According to Sun (2020), the teacher’s mediation is a dynamic process instead of a prescribed set of behaviors (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014), appropriately attuned to learner development in order to promote learner agency through co-regulation.

Therefore, at this stage, firstly, due to the merits of discussion of assessment, the time for discussion (3min) on the writing sample can be extended to 8 minutes or more next time so that students will contemplate more detailed suggestions for revision. In addition, during the discussion, the teacher may participate in it, guiding students to give more specific revisions. For example, teachers can ask students: if you were the author, what would you add in the last paragraph? Can you try to move some of sentences in the last paragraph of one of the article in reading materials to this essay?

To sum up, the teacher ought to put more time and energy to the discussion and revision part which are essential for offering scaffolding. Teachers can tell students how to imitate the material in the previous reading classes in terms of the content and structure by giving examples and ask them to write down fancy words, phrases, sentences patterns and even the inherent logic of the reading material in their notebook which will reinforce their input and help them transfer it into production.

5.3 Post-class Activities

According to Teresa McConlogue, in the collaborative assessment, the teacher’s role is to facilitate students discussion, mediate, and ensure that the peer assessment meet quality assurance and instructional requirements (McConlogue, 2020). Teachers are obliged to offer guidance and supplements in time in peer assessment.

In a nutshell, teachers should encourage students to use the words, phrases or sentences that they acquired in previous reading classes to a great extent to improve their output.

References