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Integrating Production-Oriented Approach (POA) in Flipped Classrooms: An Action Research on Enhancing Spoken English Instruction for English Majors in China

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the limitations of traditional English-speaking instruction for English majors in China, such as limited class time, insufficient opportunities for classroom speaking, and inadequate support for autonomous learning. In response to these challenges, the study presents an integrated teaching model that combines the Production-oriented Approach (POA) and Flipped Classroom in Blended Learning environments, analyzing its practical application and effectiveness through two cycles of action research. The first cycle involved 94 second-year students, focusing on how combined online and face-to-face instruction can offer equitable speaking opportunities, promote independent learning, and enhance student satisfaction. The second cycle, with 88 second-year students, refined the "write-before-speak" strategy, improved online-offline coherence, and explored how varied feedback can support self-regulation and continuous progress. The findings indicate that the integrated model effectively alleviates the lack of speaking opportunities and enhances autonomous learning by offering a flexible and diverse learning environment, supported by collaborative assessment mechanisms. Additionally, the model improves students' speaking motivation and classroom engagement by progressive procedures of motivating-enabling-assessing, transitioning from fundamental online learning to face-to-face classroom practice. This gradual progress fosters consistent language development, enabling students to tackle increasingly complex speaking tasks with confidence and competence. Overall, the study demonstrates the model's effectiveness in reforming English-speaking instruction in higher education, offering valuable insights into the design of pedagogical strategies that

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can bridge the gap between traditional instruction and the evolving needs of language learners.

Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach (POA); Blended Learning; Flipped Classroom; English Speaking; English Major; Action Research

1. Introduction

The release of the *National Standards of Teaching Quality for Foreign Language and Literature* and *China's Standards of English Language Ability* (CSELA) by the Ministry of Education of China in 2018 defines English language ability from the following perspectives: listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, interpretation, etc., and thus emphasizes English majors' skills in learning English as a foreign language and reflects the growing emphasis on promoting Chinese-featured teaching theories [1]. In particular, English speaking, as a critical part of outcome-based education, plays a quintessential role in cultivating talents [2]. The speaking English curriculum plays a central role in cultivating students' communicative competence and improving their comprehensive English proficiency. However, traditional oral teaching models face several challenges in enhancing students' speaking abilities, as students often lack autonomy, motivation, and self-discipline in oral practice, resulting in limited practice outside the classroom and hindering the consolidation and further development of the skills learned in class [3]. As a result, many English majors still struggle to engage in in-depth discussions in real-life communication scenarios, impeding their comprehensive professional development.

Blended learning, which integrates traditional classroom instruction with online learning, leverages modern educational technologies to provide flexible and personalized learning experiences. This approach effectively meets diverse learner needs while enhancing engagement and interest through interactive resources and activities [4]. Within the framework of blended learning, the flipped classroom represents a transformative teaching model. Shifting individual learning tasks to self-directed pre-class activities allows classroom time to focus on active, collaborative, and practical applications of course materials. The flipped classroom further promotes a student-centered learning environment by delivering instructional content online prior to class. This pedagogical shift fosters deeper, more innovative learning experiences that develop higher-order cognitive skills [5]. This approach transfers the primary responsibility of learning to students, while teachers take on the role of guiding knowledge construction by addressing students' individual needs. In the context of the "Internet Plus" era, this model redefines educators' roles, transforming them from knowledge transmitters to learning designers and facilitators [6]. Guided inquiry strengthens classroom interactions and supports meaningful learning outcomes, but it necessitates careful planning and adaptation to diverse class dynamics to cultivate life-long learning skills [7].

To fully realize the potential of blended learning and the flipped classroom in the EFL context in China, a robust theoretical framework is essential for guiding instructional design and implementation. As a learner-centered language teaching method that emphasizes the use of language production to promote learning, the production-oriented Approach (POA) is proposed to address key issues in foreign language teaching in Chinese universities, such as the separation between learning and application, the disconnect between content and language, and the marginalization of teachers' roles [8, 9]. The phased instructional design of the flipped classroom, encompassing pre-class knowledge delivery and in-class task-based activities, aligns seamlessly with the theoretical framework of POA. This alignment provides a practical pathway for integrating language acquisition with targeted application. By combining these approaches, the model not only fosters deep learning and active engagement but also enhances students' motivation, language application skills, and learning autonomy.

This integration establishes a strong foundation for the development of more effective and personalized teaching models. To meet the demands of modern education and effectively enhance the outcomes of oral English instruction, this study employs action research methodology to explore the integration of the Production-oriented Approach (POA) with a blended and flipped learning model in English-major oral teaching. The research aims to overcome the constraints of foreign language education imposed by factors such as

time and space limitations, compressed teaching hours, and large class sizes. Through practical teaching implementation, continuous observation, and reflective adjustments, this study seeks to refine and optimize instructional strategies, providing innovative approaches to professional oral English instruction and fostering students' oral proficiency and overall language application skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Current Trends and Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Spoken English for English Majors in Chinese Universities

Oral English courses serve as a critical component of the undergraduate curriculum for English Majors in Chinese higher education, playing a key role in the cultivation of professional English talent. In accordance with *the National Standards for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate English Majors in General Colleges and Universities* issued by the Ministry of Education of China [10], instruction must focus on competency-based education, emphasizing comprehensive language use and critical thinking skills. The standards encourage the integration of language training with subject-specific knowledge, tailored teaching approaches to foster individual growth, and the use of modern educational technologies to enhance practical outcomes and improve teaching quality.

This indicates that oral English teaching goes beyond basic language training, reflecting the humanistic values of English studies and focusing on linguistic competence, communicative strategies, and critical thinking. However, ensuring effective implementation of these standards and evaluating students' oral abilities systematically remains a significant challenge. Several persistent issues hinder its effectiveness, including insufficient awareness of the importance of oral teaching, lax management, a lack of systematic implementation, and underdeveloped evaluation systems [11]. Such challenges have significantly restricted the improvement of students' oral skills and overall language competence, underscoring the need for innovation in teaching methods and assessment frameworks.

Over the years, research on oral English teaching in China has primarily focused on the dimensions of pragmatics, specifically on the contextual factors, speech outcomes, and the impact and reflections of oral testing on teaching practices. Several theoretical frameworks have shaped this field, including second language acquisition [12], motivational theories [13, 14], and speech anxiety [15, 16]. Research has also explored metadiscourse and corpus studies [17, 18], the role of lexical chunks [19, 20], and oral testing methodologies [21–23]. In addition, studies have examined aspects of complexity and accuracy in oral performance [24–26], as well as oral proficiency scales [27–29].

Recent research has expanded into innovative teaching models for oral English, including integrating English curriculum systems [30], applying the flipped classroom model [31, 32], and exploring multimodal media applications [33]. These studies highlight the evolving nature of oral English instruction, with increasing attention on blending theoretical frameworks with practical innovations to enhance students' speaking proficiency.

Despite notable progress in the teaching of oral English in Chinese universities, research on innovative pedagogical methods, practical classroom applications, and their broader significance still remains limited. In particular, there is a lack of studies that analyze teaching methods and activities from the learner's perspective, with insufficient longitudinal empirical research to track the impact of instructional practices on student outcomes [34, 35]. This entails further refinement of teaching content, methodologies, quality assurance mechanisms, and assessment standards, along with the exploration of more effective teaching models and approaches.

2.1.2. The Production-oriented Approach (POA)

The Production-oriented Approach (POA), a foreign language teaching theory developed by Wen [8], emphasizes both the *producing* and *product* of language production, aiming to foster students' practical language ability with effective application in real scenarios. Over five stages of refinement, POA has evolved into a comprehensive framework encompassing "Teaching Principles", "Teaching Hypotheses" and "Teaching Procedures" [36, 37]. Specifically, the Teaching Principles integrate the "Learning-centered principle", "Learning-using integration principle", "Cultural Exchange principle" and "Key Competency principle", aiming to cultivate students' problem-solving abilities and cultural liter-

acy. Additionally, the Teaching Hypotheses include "the Output-motivating Hypothesis", "Input-enabling Hypothesis", "Selective Learning Hypothesis" and "Assessment for Learning Hypothesis", which promote student engagement and motivation through targeted tasks. The Teaching Process consists of three cyclical sequences: Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing, with teachers playing a pivotal role by guiding students, designing tasks, and offering scaffolding to facilitate effective learning throughout each phase [37].

This approach primarily targets intermediate and advanced foreign language learners, with the instructional audience expected to meet at least A2 level according to *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [8]. In the field of English teaching, several studies have explored the application of the Production-oriented Approach (POA) in blended learning models within university English courses, aiming to enhance teaching and learning through blended instruction [38, 39], and contribute to the construction of "first-class" and "golden" courses [40–42]. Specific studies have focused on integrating POA with blended instruction design in courses like reading and writing [43, 44] and listening and speaking [45, 46]. Moreover, experimental studies using online platforms such as U Campus and smart tools like Rain Classroom have shown the effectiveness of POA in university English teaching [47, 48].

Existing research suggests that applying POA in oral English instruction for English majors is highly feasible and significantly beneficial for improving English majors' oral communication skills, thereby meeting the national standards for oral proficiency in higher education [49, 50]. Therefore, incorporating POA into oral English courses is not only a promising approach but also a critical step toward improving language proficiency and aligning with national educational objectives.

2.1.3. The Flipped Classroom in Blended Learning Environments

Blended learning, which integrates the strengths of online and face-to-face teaching, has emerged as a pivotal approach in 21st-century higher education [51, 52]. Supported by technology and personalized instructional design, it promotes autonomous learning and deep knowledge construction, driving innovation and reform in higher education [53] Its flexibility and support for personalized learning provide innovative solutions to challenges such as limited educational resources, diverse learner needs, and optimizing teaching outcomes [54, 55].

As a type of blended learning, the flipped classroom shifts individual learning tasks traditionally completed in class to students' self-directed learning in advance of class with teacher-created videos and interactive lessons, which allows classroom time to focus on interaction, collaboration, exploration, and innovative application-based learning [5, 56]. Graham identified three levels of blended learning based on technology integration: enabling, enhancing, and transforming blends. Flipped teaching aligns with enhancing blends, aiming to leverage technology to provide superior learning experiences rather than simply replicating traditional classroom methods [57]. Extensive research confirms the positive impact of flipped classrooms on students' academic performance, learning attitudes, and engagement [58–60]. This teaching approach fosters higher-order learning skills, encouraging students to learn proactively and develop critical thinking abilities [61, 62].

The application of the flipped classroom in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching has been extensively studied and practiced, with evidence highlighting its positive impact on creating a communicative, learner-centered environment that supports students' academic performance, learning attitudes, and engagement levels [63–65]. Specifically, flipped classrooms in English oral instruction have demonstrated significant improvements in students' participation levels [66], oral performance [67], and speaking abilities [68]. Additionally, flipped oral instruction not only enhances learning outcomes but also helps teachers gain deeper insights into the feedback process and students' learning journeys [69]. As a promising innovation, the transition to a hybrid learning model, which combines both semi-face-to-face and semi-online components, effectively ensures continuity in teaching and learning, particularly during the pandemic [70, 71].

Despite its potential, implementing flipped classrooms in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching faces several challenges. These include disparities in students' self-regulation skills [72, 73], student dissatisfaction with online learning experience [74, 75], and the need for teachers to alleviate time commitment and increased workload [64, 76]. To fully realize the potential of flipped learning, future research must address these obstacles, with a particular focus on optimizing strategies to overcome them [77, 78]. While emerging

empirical studies on blended flipped classroom models for oral English instruction in Chinese universities have shown promise[79], further exploration is required to optimize the practical application of this approach. Specifically, improving pre-class preparation, in-class interaction, and post-class feedback, along with leveraging technology to support personalized and diverse learning activities, will be essential for enhancing students' language production and overall competence[31].

This study adopts an action research approach to explore and optimize the implementation of the blended flipped classroom model for English-speaking courses based on POA. It consists of two cycles: the first cycle follows the four steps of planning, action, observation, and reflection, aiming to identify challenges and improvement areas in the existing teaching model. The second cycle refines and optimizes the instructional design and implementation process based on feedback from the first cycle, with a focus on enhancing students' oral output and improving classroom interaction to achieve more effective outcomes in blended teaching.

2.2. Setting and Participants

This study employed a two-cycle action research methodology to iteratively refine the Production-oriented approach (POA) within a Flipped Classroom model in blended learning environments for an advanced oral English course. Based on the action research methodology of Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon[80], the research followed a spiral of cycles—planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and replanning—continuously refining the POA framework to ensure better alignment with course objectives and learner needs. Through comparative analysis of data from both cycles, the study provides empirical support for optimizing the Flipped Classroom approach, enhancing its adaptability, practicality, and effectiveness in English-speaking instruction.

The participants of this study were second-year students from the English (Teacher Education) program at a comprehensive applied undergraduate institution, all of whom were adults. Prior to conducting the study, participants were informed of the research purpose and significance, and their oral consent was obtained, indicating their voluntary participation. The first cycle involved 94 students from the class of 2020, while the second cycle involved 88 students from the class of 2021. Both groups demonstrated comparable English proficiency prior to the experiment, as indicated by no significant difference in their freshman year-end exam scores. Each group completed a 16-week "Oral English III" course, consisting of 2 class periods per week for a total of 32 class hours. Throughout the study, iterative adjustments and optimizations were implemented across two cycles of action research (**Table 1**).

3. Results

This section presents the two cycles of the action research in chronological order, along with key findings from each stage.

3.1. The First Cycle of Action

3.1.1. Problem-Defining

Preliminary surveys revealed that a large portion of English majors lacked confidence in their oral English proficiency, largely due to fear of language mistakes, peer pressure, and anxiety about teacher evaluations. These factors diminished their willingness to actively engage in oral English class activities. Additionally, students reported that the traditional "immediate input-output" approach limited their ability to live up to expected learning outcomes and heightened their anxiety. In combination with further teacher interviews and classroom observations, this research defined key challenges within the traditional oral English teaching model before action: (1) Large class sizes and limited instructional time hindered teachers from effectively balancing content delivery with opportunities for student engagement, particularly for disadvantaging students with weaker language skills who need adequate preparation time to effectively apply their knowledge in discussions; (2) The limited class time restricted students' exposure to diverse and extended video and audio materials, reducing the depth and variety of input, which in turn weakened speaking practice by limiting immersive learning opportunities and hindering the cognitive processes necessary for developing communicative competence and critical thinking skills; and (3) the examination of post-class speaking assignments revealed students' lack of motivation and self-regulation, resulting in minimal independent practice and poor reinforcement of the communicative skills developed during lessons.

Table 1. Design of the two action research cycles.

Cycle	First Cycle	Second Cycle
Participants	94 second-year students, Class of 2020	88 second-year students, Class of 2021
Period	September to December 2021, 16 weeks	September to December 2022, 16 weeks
Objectives	To ensure equitable speaking opportunities and personalized feedback; To foster autonomous learning and teamwork skills	To refine instructional design based on feedback from the first cycle; To enhance autonomous learning, deep learning, and critical thinking abilities
Online Platform	Chaoxing Learning Platform	Chaoxing Learning Platform, Tencent Meeting, iFlytek
Teaching Mode	16 weeks (7 online classes, 9 classroom sessions)	16 weeks (10 online classes, 6 classroom due to the pandemic)
Research Questions	(1) How can the Flipped classroom, combining online and face-to-face instructions, ensure equitable practice opportunities for all students? (2) Can students independently complete online tasks and actively engage in speaking activities? (3) Are students satisfied with the blended speaking course guided by POA?	(1) How can the "write-before-speak" phenomenon be optimized to improve natural expression? (2) How can the coherence between online and offline instruction be enhanced? (3) Can diverse feedback dynamics support students in managing self-regulation challenges to ensure steady progress?
Evaluation Methods	Classroom observation; online platform data; oral English assessment; satisfaction surveys	Classroom observation; online platform data; oral English assessment; satisfaction surveys

Based on the analysis of the current state of oral English instruction for English majors and a survey of the needs of the 2020 class, the first cycle of this study identified key research questions to guide the design and implementation of a blended English-speaking course under the Production-oriented approach (POA) in Flipped classroom model:

(1) How can the Flipped classroom, combining online and face-to-face instructions, ensure equitable practice opportunities for all students?
(2) Can students independently complete online tasks and actively engage in speaking activities?
(3) Are students satisfied with the blended oral English course guided by POA?

3.1.2. Action-Planning

Prior to the first research cycle, the "Oral English III" course adopting the Flipped Classroom model was designed under the POA framework. The course objectives were clearly outlined based on the teaching syllabus and talent cultivation plan specific to English majors at the target university. Flexible adjustments were incorporated into the course's assessment structure to align with the blended learning framework (**Table 2**). Throughout the semester, formative assessments evaluated student engagement and performance across both online and offline components, focusing on participation, task completion, oral output quality, and peer interaction. These assessments aimed to test the feasibility and effectiveness of the innovative model. Summative evaluations were conducted through a final oral examination to comprehensively measure the impact of the blended approach on students' speaking proficiency.

In designing blended learning content and tasks, the Production-oriented approach (POA) emphasizes transforming textbook-based "static" knowledge into dynamic, applicable content, requiring teachers to adapt instructional materials to align with learning objectives by selecting, adjusting, modifying, or supplementing the textbook content[81]. This process involves converting written materials in textbooks into multi-modal resources, including videos, audio clips, and images, to engage multiple sensory systems simultaneously so as to create authentic scenarios of oral output. The course employed *Contemporary College English: Oral English III* as its primary textbook, comprising multiple units that exceeded the available instructional hours. To effectively address this limitation, a theme-based teaching approach was implemented, concentrating on two key themes: Self-exploration (encompassing "Who am I," "Interpersonal Relationships," and "Ideal Career") and Cultural Diversity (including "Generational Differences," "East-West Cultural Integration," and "Gender Equality"). This structure ensured

Table 2. Assessment elements in "Oral English III" course.

Assessment Structure	Assessment Category	Components	Evaluation Methods
Formative Assessment (50%)	Classroom Participation (20%)	Attendance rate (5%) Engagement and Participation (5%) Oral Presentation (Teamwork) (10%)	Peer Review, Teacher Evaluation
	Online Practice (20%)	Tasks (10%) Learning Time (5%) Improvement (5%)	Data Monitoring, Teacher Evaluation
	Interactive Feedback (10%)	Interactive performance (10%)	Peer Review, Teacher Evaluation
Summative Assessment (50%)	Impromptu Response (20%)	Content (10%) Fluency (5%) Pronunciation (5%)	Teacher Evaluation
	Topic Speech (30%)	Content (10%) Language (10%) Performance (10%)	

the inclusion of six essential units while maintaining focus and depth within the given course schedule.

To ensure equal opportunities for all students to practice speaking, a blended flipped classroom model was planned to implement a structured transition across two periods per unit, following three key stages: online autonomous study, classroom collaborative practice, and post-class reinforcement with feedback (**Appendix A)**. Teachers pre-constructed courses on the university's designated platform, Chaoxing Learning platform, and introduced the learning objectives, instructional process, and output tasks in the first class, encouraging students to manage their online learning autonomously.

In the first session of each unit, students were required to log into the designated online class punctually and complete the assigned "motivating" and "enabling" tasks by submitting individual or group audio or video recordings of their oral practice. Teachers tracked students' progress through platform data, provided real-time assistance, and delivered delayed feedback to enhance learning. In the subsequent face-to-face session, teachers facilitated topic reviews through interactive questions and activities, guiding students to reapply key expressions related to the theme. The lesson progressed with two group presentations offering opposing perspectives on the topic, followed by peer evaluations and audience questions to stimulate thoughtful dialogue. Afterward, teachers provided immediate feedback, facilitated discussions, and introduced critical viewpoints, guiding students in developing well-structured arguments from both affirmative and opposing perspectives while enhancing expression accuracy. Finally, the unit culminated in assigning a collaborative output task, where audience groups would synthesize their learning by substituting video presentations. Teachers further supported their progress through detailed online feedback, helping students refine their speaking skills and effectively prepare for the next unit.

3.1.3. Action Observation

Throughout the study, data collection was carried out using a multi-tiered evaluation mechanism, including online data monitoring, peer evaluations, and teacher feedback. For units with unusually long or short study durations, teachers promptly adjusted the learning content to align with in-class teaching hours, managing students' workload effectively. For students with irregular study times or low task completion rates, teachers provided timely interventions and support to ensure steady progress. Additionally, teachers tracked and evaluated students' oral performance in complex tasks, identifying those with personalized learning needs. For struggling students, personalized assistance was given in advance to pinpoint difficulties and develop improvement strategies. Meanwhile, students demonstrating strong interest and motivation were offered more challenging self-selected tasks to stimulate higher learning potential.

After completing the 16-week action research, a detailed evaluation of student performance and feedback on the blended learning model was conducted. Statistical data from the online sessions showed that 96% of students consistently participated in each exercise, with 93% indepen-

dently completing all assigned tasks. Overall, the blended teaching model demonstrated a positive impact on ensuring equal opportunities for students to engage in speaking activities. This aligns with Graham's findings [57], which highlight how blended learning fosters a more balanced distribution of participation opportunities throughout the learning process. However, variations were observed in both the duration and quality of students' engagement with online activities, while participation in face-to-face sessions fluctuated, particularly during spontaneous Q&A activities, with uneven volunteering, as more confident students dominated discussions. These findings highlight disparities in student involvement across different learning environments, indicating a need for further refinement to ensure more balanced engagement.

To further assess student satisfaction and gather feedback on the blended oral English course, a survey questionnaire was distributed (see **Table 3**). Out of the 59 valid responses, students expressed overall satisfaction with the teaching methods, course content, and learning resources. They highlighted the effectiveness of integrating the Production-oriented approach (POA) with the blended teaching model in enhancing speaking practice design and fostering greater interest in learning. However, when asked, "Do you think the integration of online and offline teaching is effective?" 11.86% of students responded "neutral," and 1.69% indicated "not very effective," suggesting that the coordination between online and offline components did not fully meet the expectations of all learners. Additionally, in open-ended responses, students provided specific suggestions for improvement, such as refining platform requirements, increasing opportunities for teacher-student interaction, and incorporating more practical activities. These responses indicate that insufficient guidance and structured requirements might have reduced students' motivation to engage with online tasks and classroom activities, thereby impacting the overall learning experience.

3.1.4. Discussion and Reflection

Drawing on data from online learning data, teaching logs, classroom observations, and post-class interviews, teachers conducted a phased evaluation and reflection on the instructional outcomes, identifying key challenges from the first research cycle to inform further course improvements.

Although online learning offers flexibility and self-paced study, it also presented challenges related to self-regulation. Blended learning environments frequently fail to meet the needs of students lacking adequate self-regulated learning (SRL) skills [82]. In the first session of online classes, some students exhibited procrastination and failed to complete tasks on time, often rushing through assignments near deadlines, which negatively impacted the quality of their online work and subsequently weakened their participation and outcomes in offline sessions. Because of some level of autonomy and freedom offered in blended courses, students are required to exert a higher level of self-control in their online component in order to overcome learner isolation and the less spontaneous online interaction nature of blended learning, which causes procrastination [83].

In addition, the effectiveness of teacher feedback in the blended model was also limited by class size, which made it challenging to provide timely and individualized feedback, particularly for extended unit tasks. Instructors, in particular, found the online portion of the unit required more time than originally anticipated for grading and providing feedback This finding is consistent with Kenney and Newcombe's results [84], which suggest that class size, more than student preparation, has a greater impact on participation, serving as a key variable that can negatively influence active engagement and interaction. Delays in feedback further contributed to students' procrastination, impacting their engagement and quality of output in subsequent offline sessions. As shown in previous studies, time commitment and increased workload (heavy demands of the flipped model) are two of the main reported challenges by both the students and the instructors [76].

In online oral practice, students often adopted a scripted delivery approach, preparing and reading pre-written content aloud. While this strategy fostered independent learning and encouraged the use of more complex language, it also revealed challenges in developing spontaneous discussion and communication skills. One interviewed student expressed the difficulty as follows:

> *"Honestly, I feel more confident when I prepare a script in advance because I'm often concerned about making grammar or pronunciation mistakes. Pre-written content helps me address my ideas more clearly and boosts my confidence. However, I've realized that it can limit my motivation to participate in spontaneous classroom discussions. During interac-*

Table 3. Student satisfaction survey data: class of 2020 (first cycle action research).

Survey Questions	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
1. Are satisfied you with the content of blended oral course?	57.63%	35.59%	6.78%	0	0
2. Does the course content meet your learning needs?	54.24%	38.98%	6.78%	0	0
3. Are you satisfied with the teaching methods employed in the blended course?	59.32%	37.29%	3.39%	0	0
4. Do you find the integration of online and offline teaching effective?	52.54%	33.9%	11.86%	1.69%	0
5. Are satisfied you with the online learning platform?	49.15%	42.37%	8.47%	0	0
6. Are you satisfied with the interactive activities in the blended course?	49.15%	45.76%	5.08%	0	0
7. Are you satisfied with the learning resources?	52.54%	45.76%	1.69%	0	0
8. What is your overall satisfaction with the blended oral English course?	49.15%	47.46%	3.39%	0	0

tive sessions, I sometimes feel anxious about using unprepared phrases and find it challenging to keep up with my peers, which affects my overall learning experience."

This reliance on scripted speech exposes students' underlying anxiety in engaging in spontaneous communication, which creates a psychological barrier, inhibiting students from participating actively in real-time oral practices. This finding aligns with Ginaya, Rejeki and Astuti's research on observing that students struggled to express their thoughts freely during group discussions and pair activities [85]. Fear of making language errors not only undermined the effectiveness of collaborative knowledge-sharing but also intensified insecurity, particularly for slower learners, making them more hesitant to engage with others and further diminishing their motivation to participate actively in interactive learning tasks. When learners engage in real-time expression, they often experience significant cognitive and psychological pressure due to an underdeveloped interlanguage system, time constraints, and high linguistic demands, making it difficult to manage attention effectively and resulting in compromises in topic generation and language production, such as heightened anxiety or the adoption of avoidance strategies [86].

3.2. Second Cycle of Action Research

In response to the core challenges identified in the first cycle, the blended teaching plan was revised to enhance instructional strategies for the second cycle of action research.

3.2.1. Hypotheses and Plan Redesign

Van Laer and Elen identify self-regulation challenges, such as procrastination, as being intricately tied to seven key attributes of blended learning environments: authenticity, personalized task selection, learner autonomy in choosing tasks, support for aligning goal-directed efforts, scaffolding to mitigate cognitive overload during complex tasks, reflective practices triggered by feedback-integrated cues, and peer interaction [87]. Building on these findings, the second cycle of action research aimed to optimize the motivating stage of the Production-oriented Approach (POA) by refining strategies to enhance student engagement. According to the evaluation criteria for this stage—authenticity of communication, cognitive challenge, and alignment with output goals—teachers should craft communicative scenarios that align with students' current proficiency levels and familiar topics, ensuring tasks are both practical and intellectually stimulating [9]. Additionally, communicative task design should prioritize fostering autonomous participation, encouraging students to reflect on their learning processes and use feedback mechanisms effectively to develop self-regulation skills.

To address the challenges of students' reliance on prewritten language plans during oral practice—stemming from cognitive overload, emotional anxiety, and frequent use of communication avoidance strategies [85], the second cycle of action research implemented a refined instructional approach. This approach drew on Ahmadian's distinction between guided and unguided careful online planning, integrating these strategies to foster more spontaneous and confident language production while reducing dependency on scripted

content[86].

Guided careful online planning directs learners' attention to specific linguistic features, such as key grammatical rules or vocabulary items, facilitating targeted retrieval of explicit knowledge. For example, when tasked with describing past events, students were prompted to recall and apply verb tenses, enabling focused practice that reduces cognitive demands. This structured approach not only enhances precision but also boosts confidence by narrowing learners' focus to manageable linguistic elements. Conversely, unguided careful planning allows students to explore linguistic resources more broadly, fostering flexibility and creativity by encouraging engagement without emphasizing particular grammatical targets. Together, these complementary strategies address different aspects of language learning, balancing targeted practice with exploratory use.

In alignment with the Production-oriented Approach's (POA) principle of learning-using integration, the instructional design emphasized the immediate application of learned material to strengthen the connection between knowledge acquisition and practical use. Students were tasked with mini-productive activities, such as role-playing or summarizing discussions, immediately after engaging with content. These tasks functioned as transitional bridges, reinforcing comprehension by requiring students to actively retrieve and apply linguistic elements in communicative scenarios. For instance, Role-playing offered a practical context for applying target grammar and vocabulary while simulating authentic conversational dynamics, requiring real-time adjustments. Similarly, summarizing discussions encouraged students to distill key points and express them in their own words, fostering deeper cognitive engagement. These tasks shifted the focus from rote memorization to adaptive language use, reducing reliance on pre-prepared scripts and building confidence in spontaneous communication. The immediacy of these activities minimized avoidance strategies, compelling students to actively engage with material while it was fresh, strengthening retention and enabling seamless integration into real-time communication. By promoting active, context-sensitive application of language, this approach fosters autonomous participation and aligns with the POA's core objectives of learning-using integration.

To enhance this process, the second cycle introduced multi-layered scaffolding aligned with specific output goals. The instructional design decomposed enabling tasks into incremental stages, following a bottom-up sequence of "word-phrase-sentence-paragraph-discourse"[88]. This structured progression ensured smooth transitions between online and offline activities, with each level supporting the development of higher-order structures, guiding students toward achieving their final output goals. At the linguistic level, the redesigned framework emphasized the use of collocations and sentence patterns to foster essential expression skills, gradually building students' confidence while reducing their dependence on pre-written content during online sessions. As students gained proficiency in basic expressions, more advanced tasks were introduced to increase linguistic complexity. On the skills level, tasks followed a "productive-interactive-receptive" sequence, strengthening both language output and cognitive organization to enable more effective participation in interactive learning.

Lastly, to effectively address the challenges of delayed feedback and limited interaction inherent in large class settings, the second cycle incorporated the Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA) principle across pre-class, in-class, and post-class stages[89]. This structured approach aimed to enhance learning outcomes through goal-oriented, problem-based strategies supported by scaffolding and continuous monitoring[90]. Furthermore, multiple feedback mechanisms, including real-time machine feedback, peer assessments, and delayed teacher evaluations, were integrated to minimize feedback latency, ensuring that students received timely and effective guidance. Moreover, to ensure equitable participation, formative assessments were designed to include group contributions, promoting balanced involvement across group members. This redistribution ensured continuous task improvement, fostering a sense of shared responsibility, ultimately enhancing both collaborative learning and individual performance.

3.2.2. Re-Implementation and Process Observation

To enhance coherence between online and offline instruction, the research team refined the three phases of the POA teaching procedures—motivating, enabling, and assessing—and implemented a structured schedule and task checklist for each unit to establish clear objectives for each phase, monitor student progress, and ensure timely production completion (see **Appendix B** for details).

(1) *A Staged Motivating Structure.*

In the online motivating phase, diverse and authentic communicative scenarios, such as cross-cultural films, role-playing, news reporting, and Vlogging, were integrated to motivate students to engage in initial productive activities and identify challenges. It enhanced students' adaptability to diverse cultural contexts by removing traditional classroom formalities and seamlessly embedding learning into their daily lives. The motivation process followed a staged structure, beginning with descriptive tasks (e.g., scene or event descriptions) to build a foundation for personal reflection and comprehension-based outputs. In the subsequent motivation phase, students were assigned analytical tasks (e.g., debates, interviews, roundtable discussions) to tackle cognitively demanding concepts and articulate complex ideas effectively. In this process, students' learning goals became clearer and were continually reinforced as tasks progressed. Dynamic interactive tasks directly motivated presenters to practice their language skills, while audience members enhanced their comprehension and oral expression through peer observation. This active engagement fostered a collaborative environment, further boosting the motivation of all participants.

(2) *A Step-by-Step Enabling Process.*

The second action research cycle employed gradual and progressive enabling stages to develop students' linguistic systems and rhetorical devices. During the first online sessions, students built personalized expression frameworks through pre-set "word-to-sentence" individual tasks, such as retelling personal stories or video content. Subsequently, students engaged in interactive tasks that simulated communication scenarios, supported by targeted resources such as micro-lessons or recorded lectures. This step laid the framework of language proficiency from the "sentence-to-paragraph" level, guiding students in organizing ideas through argumentative structures, such as *PEEL Structure (Point, Evidence, Explain, Link), Problem-Solution Structure, and The STAR Method (Situation, Task, Action, Result)*. In second classroom sessions, group demonstration activities (e.g., debates or roundtable discussions) were conducted to facilitate "paragraph-to-discourse" development with the guidance of applying mind maps to establish a logical framework for expression, like *Thesis Statement-Main Arguments-Development with Evidence-Counterarguments-Conclusion.* Finally, in the final unit output phase, students integrated their learning from the previous stages, working collaboratively within groups to achieve coherent and structured expression.

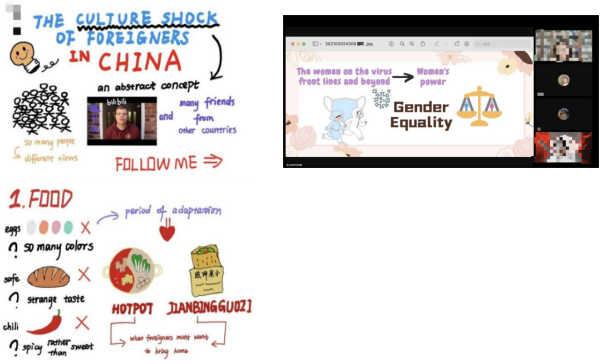
(3) *A Collaborative Feedback System.*

A multi-channel assessment framework was employed throughout the implementation phase to support learning feedback. After submitting initial recordings, students conducted self-assessment using the iFlytek oral evaluation system, which provided immediate feedback on indicators such as language accuracy and fluency. Based on the system's suggestions, students autonomously revised their outputs and engaged in repeated practice. Students then shared revised manuscripts and recordings on the discussion forum, where peer evaluation was conducted according to jointly established assessment criteria, thereby alleviating the feedback burden on instructors. Revised recordings were uploaded for peer evaluation based on mutually agreed criteria, reducing the burden on teachers. Teachers also provided targeted feedback on common errors in online discussion forums and offered personalized support to students with specific learning needs. Group presentations involved audience members posing questions and offering feedback and evaluations, ensuring active engagement and mutual learning. Teachers provided instant feedback and assessment, addressing misunderstandings and clarifying key concepts.

(4) *Adaptations for Online Learning.*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second phase of the action research could not follow the original plan of alternating between online and offline teaching modes. Just like the findings of Broeckelman-Post, Hyatt Hawkins, Arciero and Malterud suggest that online public speaking courses can be as effective in reducing communication anxiety and improving communication competence[91], but they align with the view that course design and instruction are crucial, as they highlight the importance of replicating the social dynamics, support, and feedback of face-to-face classes in online settings to enhance students' communication competence[92, 93]. To preserve the integrity of the original design, the classroom teaching sessions were transitioned to live interactions via Tencent Meetings, with adjustments made to facilitate interactive activities. For instance, group collaborations that were initially designed for in-class sessions were shifted to online breakout meetings with teacher guidance.

In-class presentations were modified to include visual aids, such as drawings or posters, with students delivering impromptu speeches during live sessions (**Figure 1**). Teachers provided real-time feedback, organized peer reviews, and voted to enhance interactivity. These adjustments ensured engaging and immersive experiences, promoting creative expression while fostering adaptability and confidence in real-life communication scenarios. The revised model also prepared students to better navigate uncertainties and challenges in future professional contexts.



(a) **(b)**

Figure 1. (**a**) Student work samples from online course sessions. (**b**) Screenshot of a live online meeting session.

3.2.3. Assessing and Reflection

During the second round of blended English-speaking instruction, continuous data collection through a multi-level evaluation mechanism (including online data monitoring, teaching evaluations, and teacher-student collaborative assessments) revealed improvements in student outcomes, experience, and engagement compared to the first round. Online learning data and classroom observations showed significant gains in students' self-directed learning, participation, language practice quality, and critical thinking skills. Notably, foundational online exercises provided scaffolding for more advanced language output in offline classes, enhancing students' topic comprehension and deep thinking, as well as their overall classroom engagement. These findings are consistent with the results of Akçayır and Akçayır's review[76], which highlighted the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in improving learner outcomes, enabling individualized learning, and fostering student-instructor interaction. This suggests that while flipped classrooms demand time and effort, these challenges can be managed to promote meaningful interactions in large-scale communicative courses, allowing students to learn at their own pace and engage more productively with teachers.

Student evaluation data from the academic system shows that 89 students participated in the course evaluation, with 81 valid responses. The course received an overall score of 99.12, indicating a positive student attitude toward the redesigned model. Students reported that the course effectively improved their speaking and critical thinking skills. To compare students' adaptability and satisfaction with the blended speaking course after two rounds of practice, another satisfaction survey was conducted to investigate overall feedback (**Table 4**). Among the 48 valid responses, 64.58% of students reported being "very satisfied," 33.33% expressed being "satisfied," and only 2.08% selected "neutral," with no "dissatisfied" feedback. Students generally appreciated the course design, activity variety, and teaching methods for speaking. However, some students complained about excessive online tasks and content difficulty, and classroom discipline management was noted as needing improvement. This feedback highlights the need for future improvements in course design, content balance, and classroom management to ensure a more structured and effective learning experience.

4. Discussion

To verify the changes in students' oral proficiency after the two cycles of practice and to assess the effectiveness of the blended teaching model, independent sample t-tests were conducted on the regular performance, final exam scores, and overall semester grades of students from the 2020 and 2021 cohorts. The results showed that the regular performance scores of the 2020 cohort (85.28) were significantly lower than those of the 2021 cohort (87.71), $t = 3.83$, $p < 0.001$. However, in terms of final exam scores, the 2020 cohort (85.03) scored significantly higher than the 2021 cohort (82.58), $t = 3.21$, $p < 0.05$. As for the overall semester grades, the 2020 cohort (85.355) and the 2021 cohort (85.348) were almost identical, with no significant difference between the two groups ($t = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$).

The course test results across the two cycles of research revealed a notable phenomenon: while the 2021 cohort's average performance scores were significantly higher than those of the 2020 cohort, their final exam scores were comparatively lower. This discrepancy is likely related to changes in

Table 4. Student satisfaction survey data: class of 2021 (second cycle action research).

Survey Questions	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
1. Are satisfied you with the content of blended oral course?	60.42%	39.58%	0	0	0
2. Does the course content meet your learning needs?	52.08%	45.83%	0	0	0
3. Are you satisfied with the teaching methods employed in the blended course?	68.75%	31.25%	0	0	0
4. Do you find the integration of online and offline teaching effective?	58.33%	33.33%	8.33%	0	0
5. Are satisfied you with the online learning platform?	54.17%	39.58%	6.25%	0	0
6. Are you satisfied with the interactive activities in the blended course?	62.5%	33.33%	4.17%	0	0
7. Are you satisfied with the learning resources?	62.5%	35.42%	2.08%	0	0
8. What is your overall satisfaction with the blended oral English course?	64.58%	33.33%	2.08%	0	0

the alignment between the focuses of research objectives and the adjusted instructions, as well as the reduced frequency of classroom interaction resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2nd action research placed greater emphasis on developing students' spontaneous expression skills in natural contexts, which diverged somewhat from the final exam's focus on language fluency and accuracy. Since the final oral assessment consisted of two components: impromptu responses (20%) and public speaking (30%), the greater weight given to the prepared speech allowed students ample time to organize, rehearse, and refine their presentations, ensuring clarity, coherence, and fluency, which are crucial for performing well in more formal, structured language assessments.

The final grades of the 2020 cohort were higher than those of the 2021 cohort, which may be attributed to the 2020 students engaging in more self-directed practice during online courses. Notably, they exhibited a stronger reliance on the "write-then-speak" approach, which led to a greater focus on accuracy and fluency during practice in planning for language production. This improvement was reflected in their enhanced language organization during the final topic presentations. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Yuan and Ellis [94, 95], who noted that online planning increases attention to grammatical accuracy, though often at the expense of fluency and with a reliance on more basic vocabulary. In contrast, pre-task planning encourages a focus on information delivery, resulting in greater fluency and more diverse vocabulary usage.

Additionally, the refinement of the POA teaching process and the introduction of diverse assessment mechanisms in the second cycle, such as group evaluation and teacher-student collaborative assessment, significantly improved students' engagement and task completion. These improvements contributed to their higher scores in formative assessments. However, the increased engagement also demanded more time investment in group work and limited time available for self-study, which led to less time they devoted to refining language accuracy, organization, and structure in individual practices. In contrast, the 2020 cohort, with fewer opportunities for teamwork and concentrated more of their time and effort on personal preparation, leading to relatively better final exam results. This discrepancy is not indicative of a lack of ability in the 2021 cohort but rather reflects differences in learning strategies and practice approaches. Despite the significant differences in formative and summative assessments, the overall semester grades between the two cohorts were largely balanced, demonstrating the robustness of the evaluation system and the fairness in grade distribution.

In conclusion, the assessment results from the two cycles of action research reveal that different teaching models and evaluation methods have a significant impact on student learning outcomes. To better balance formative and summative assessments, future course design should focus on adjusting both teaching content and evaluation methods. For example, while fostering students' spontaneous expression, it is essential to strengthen training in language accuracy and normative use, and include mock exams to familiarize students with test formats and requirements, thereby enhancing both language accuracy and organizational skills.

Additionally, the formative assessment mechanisms should be optimized to guide students in accumulating and

internalizing knowledge, rather than merely emphasizing participation and task completion. Clear communication of exam scope and regular review reminders can help maintain focus on effectively managing their time between routine learning and exam preparation, ensuring that the importance of final exams is not overlooked.

These improvements would enhance the motivational function of formative assessments while ensuring students achieve satisfactory results in summative assessments, ultimately fulfilling the goal of developing students' comprehensive language proficiency.

5. Conclusions

This study explores the practical application of the Production-oriented Approach (POA) and the flipped classroom model in blended learning environments for oral English courses, conducted through two cycles of action research with English majors. By refining the POA's teaching procedures of motivating, enabling and assessing, the model ensures equal student participation and contribution to course completion. The findings indicate that this teaching approach was well-received by students, showing improvements in oral communication skills, autonomous learning, and interactive engagement, thereby enhancing the quality of instruction and the learning experience. However, certain limitations remain, such as the need for a more refined course design tailored to students' learning needs, deeper integration of technology in blended learning, and a more effective combination of formative and summative assessment across all stages. Future research should further investigate the practical application of POA and blended learning across diverse instructional contexts. Moreover, efforts should focus on better addressing students' individualized learning needs to create a more effective, inclusive, and student-centered educational environment.

Author Contributions

All authors have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, including but not limited to Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing—Original Draft, and Writing—Review and Editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were guaranteed, and participation was completely voluntary.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Design of Blended Oral Teaching Process Using POA in the First Cycle of Action Research.

Teaching Stage		Teaching Procedures	Teaching Content	Duration
First Session	Online Platform	Motivating	Theme Introduction and Communication Scenarios; Initial attempting of production	Autonomous Completion Agenda: Week-Basis
		Enabling	Theme-Exploration with Input of Videos/ Recorded Micro-Lectures scaffolding questions	
			Group collaboration and discussions	
		Assessing	Peer Evaluation and Teacher Feedback	
		Post-Class Motivation	Final Unit Production: Group Presentation, Co-designed evaluation rubric	
Second Session	F2F Classroom	Presenter-Motivating; Audience-enabling	Group presentations; Q&A Interaction (audience groups ask questions and presenters responds)	1 lesson
		Assessing	Teacher Evaluation	
		Enabling	Teacher introduces counterarguments to challenge students, guiding deeper learning of the theme	1 lesson
		Motivating	Unit Production: Video-recording Group presentations for the whole class	
Post-Class	Online Platform	Enabling	Post-class practice, complete video recording and upload	Assignment
		Assessing	Online Group Evaluation and Teacher Feedback	

Appendix B

Table A2. Teaching Process Design for the Second Cycle of Action Research (Example: Unit 3 East Meets West).

Teaching Stage	Teaching Process	Teaching Content	Duration
First Session (Online Platform)	Motivating	1. Present authentic communication scenarios: (1) Watch the movie *The Joy Luck Club* (2) Plot Intriguing: Compare Chinese and Western cultures through the lens of mother-daughter conflicts (3) What should we do when we encounter cultural shocks?	Preview
		2. Attempt final production (1) Select movie scenes and analyze the causes of cultural differences (2) Watch micro-lectures and summarize the main differences between the two cultures	Autonomous Completion Plan: Week-Basis (Within 2 Days)
		3. Teacher Clarifies Teaching Goals and Production **Production 1**: Interpret the "East Meets West" infographics (1) Communication Goals: Be able to verbally describe cultural differences between China and Germany depicted in the image and analyze the underlying reasons for Chinese-Western cultural differences. (2) Language Goals: Be able to use vocabulary and phrases related to cultural differences and accurately employ contrastive sentence structures to discuss cultural phenomena. **Production 2** (Group Presentation in classroom): Simulate a talk show (1) Communication Goals: Summarize the similarities and differences between Chinese and American cultures and values, identify potential points of cultural conflict or integration, and discuss their impact on Chinese cultural identity. (2) Language Goals: use complex sentence structures such as compound, conditional, and hypothetical sentences to enhance the logic and persuasiveness of the argument.	

Table A2. *Cont.*

Teaching Stage	Teaching Process	Teaching Content	Duration
	Enabling	**Language Enabling**: (1) Target language: use complex sentence structures such as compound, conditional, and hypothetical sentences to enhance the logic and persuasiveness of the argument. (2) Enabling strategies: Bottom-up sequence from "word—phrase—sentence—paragraph—discourse"	
		Content Enabling: (1) Target content: Movie understanding, "cultural shock" infographic, exploration of underlying social phenomena (textbook articles, video materials), supplementary videos to deepen concepts (microlectures, recorded videos) (2) Enabling Strategies: Audio-visual materials (understanding),shadowing/recall (recognition, memory), answering questions (checking comprehension), sharing viewpoints (expansion and application)	
		Structure Enabling: (1) Target structure: Descriptive, inductive, and comparative expression frameworks (2) Enabling strategies: Gradual progression of descriptive, analytical, inductive tasks	
	Assessing	Machine evaluation and self-revision	Within 1 days
		Group peer review and collaborative interaction	Within 2 days
		Teacher's Phase-based sample evaluation and Phase-Based Comments	Within 2 days
Second Session (F2F Classroom)	Enabling 1	Group presentation: Two groups simulate a talk show: "Does the influence of Western culture and values undermine traditional Chinese culture and values? Will Chinese people lose cultural identity in the face of globalization?"	1 lesson
	Assessing	Peer Assessment Activity: Interactive Q&A Between Audience and Presenting Groups	
		Teacher feedback on Presentation Performance	
	Enabling 2	(1) Theme-exploration and critical thinking activities: Input and Contextualization (2) Counter-Examples and Divergent Thinking (3) Synthesis of Pros and Cons	1 lesson
	Motivating 2	Final Unit Production Assignment: Each group will collaboratively design, rehearse, and perform a talk show that incorporates the key themes and language skills developed throughout the unit.	
Post-Class (Online)	Motivating 1	Group Presentation Task: Upload the video to the designated platform by the specified deadline.	Review & Assignment
	Assessing	Peer evaluation: Evaluation Form and Actionable Advice	
		Teacher evaluation: Personalized feedback	

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