Applying the Production-Oriented Approach to Hotel English Speaking Instruction in a Vocational College Context: An Empirical Study

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Abstract: This study addresses three persistent challenges in vocational college Hotel English speaking instruction: low student initiative, learning-application disconnection, and lack of authentic task design. It evaluates the effectiveness of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) — a Chinese indigenous theory — through a 14-week quasi-experiment with 96 first-year hotel management students. The experimental group followed POA's three-stage "Motivating – Enabling – Assessing" procedure using hotel-specific tasks (e.g., front desk, housekeeping, complaint handling), while the control group received conventional instruction. Data included pre/post oral assessments (CET-SET rubric), the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and interviews. Results showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in oral fluency, accuracy, and task completion quality, and reported markedly lower speaking anxiety. The findings suggest POA effectively transforms inert knowledge into productive communicative competence in vocational ESP contexts, offering practical implications for Hotel English curriculum design.

Keywords: Production-Oriented Approach (POA); Hotel English Speaking; Vocational College English Teaching; Learning-Application Integration; Speaking Anxiety

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Hotel English, as a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), constitutes a core competency course for hotel management and tourism management majors in China's vocational colleges. The course aims to equip students with the oral communication skills necessary to interact effectively with international guests in real-world hospitality settings, including front desk reception, concierge services, housekeeping, food and beverage service, and complaint handling. Given the rapid growth of China's inbound tourism market and the increasing internationalization of the domestic hospitality industry, the ability to communicate fluently and appropriately in English has become a critical employability skill for vocational college graduates entering the hotel sector.

Despite its practical importance, Hotel English speaking instruction in vocational colleges has encountered persistent difficulties. Several interlocking challenges have been identified in the literature. First, vocational college students typically have weak English foundations and often exhibit a "fear of English" — a psychological barrier that manifests as low self-efficacy, high speaking anxiety, and passive learning behaviors. Research has shown that speaking anxiety is a significant factor affecting English learning effectiveness among vocational college students [1], and many students hesitate to speak English even when they possess receptive knowledge of vocabulary and sentence patterns. Second, the problem of "inert knowledge" is particularly acute in ESP courses: students accumulate vocabulary items and sentence patterns through rote memorization, yet these receptive knowledge elements "cannot be automatically transformed into productive competence for daily communication". This learning-application disconnection is widely recognized as a central obstacle to effective vocational English instruction. Third, many Hotel English textbooks present content in a formulaic manner — organized by hotel departments with lists of standard phrases and sample dialogues — but lack authentic,

task-driven activities that simulate real workplace communication demands. Traditional instructional approaches, which emphasize vocabulary drills and sentence translation, tend to exacerbate students' resistance and fail to cultivate the spontaneous communicative competence required in hospitality settings.

These challenges collectively point to a need for a pedagogical framework that can: (a) activate students' learning motivation by making the relevance of English to their future careers immediately tangible; (b) bridge the gap between receptive knowledge acquisition and productive oral output; and (c) provide authentic, task-based learning experiences that mirror real-world hotel service scenarios.

1.2 The Production-Oriented Approach as a Potential Solution

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA), developed by Professor Wen Qiufang of Beijing Foreign Studies University, offers a promising solution to these challenges. POA is a Chinese indigenous foreign language teaching theory that has been developed through over a decade of rigorous theoretical and practical exploration. It represents a systematic pedagogical framework that integrates teaching principles, theoretical assumptions, and instructional procedures specifically designed for the Chinese educational context. Wen Qiufang has articulated that the POA system covers multiple levels — teaching philosophy, teaching hypotheses, and teaching procedures — demonstrating specificity, innovativeness, and practicality [2-4].

The POA framework is built upon three core teaching principles: (1) the *Learning-Centered Principle*, which positions learning as the central concern of instruction; (2) the *Learning-Using Integrated Principle*, which asserts that input learning and output application should be seamlessly connected rather than separated; and (3) the *Whole-Person Development Principle*, which encompasses cultural awareness and key competency cultivation. These principles are operationalized through three teaching hypotheses: Output-Driven, Input-Enabled, and Selective Learning, supported by a three-stage instructional cycle of Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing.

What makes POA particularly well-suited to Hotel English instruction is its fundamental orientation toward authentic production. Unlike traditional approaches that treat input (listening and reading) as the starting point of learning and output (speaking and writing) as the endpoint, POA reverses this sequence. The instruction begins with a motivating task — a simulated workplace scenario — in which students attempt to produce the target language *before* receiving instructional input. This initial "productive failure" serves a critical pedagogical function: students become aware of the gap between their current proficiency and the demands of the real-world task, thereby generating a genuine "learning hunger". In the Hotel English context, this means that students first attempt to handle a guest check-in, respond to a complaint, or provide concierge services; they experience the difficulty directly; and they are thus intrinsically motivated to acquire the necessary language and strategies in the subsequent enabling stage.

Moreover, POA's emphasis on "learning-using integration" directly addresses the inert knowledge problem. In the enabling stage, instructional inputs are not delivered as decontextualized vocabulary lists but as scaffolding that is precisely tailored to the output task. Students engage in selective learning, choosing from the input materials only what is relevant to their immediate productive needs. The evaluation stage, which Wen terms Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA), further reinforces the productive orientation by focusing assessment on students' output quality rather than on isolated knowledge recall.

1.3 Research Gaps and Research Questions

While POA has been extensively applied to general English instruction, including college English, writing courses, and listening and speaking courses, its application to ESP contexts — particularly Hotel English — remains relatively underexplored. The majority of POA empirical studies have focused on university-level general English or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) settings. A limited number of studies have examined POA in vocational college ESP contexts [5]. Zhang (2019) applied POA to a Hotel English course and reported improvements in student engagement, though her study was primarily descriptive and lacked quantitative outcome measures [6]. Su (2019) designed a POA-based teaching practice for a Hotel English unit on reception services, but her study did not include a control group or pre-post testing. More

recently, researchers have investigated POA's effectiveness in reducing speaking anxiety among vocational college students [7], with promising preliminary findings. However, no study to date has systematically examined the application of the full POA framework — encompassing all three stages of motivating, enabling, and assessing — to Hotel English speaking instruction in a vocational college setting using a controlled quasi-experimental design with both quantitative and qualitative outcome measures.

The present study aims to address this gap by investigating the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does POA-based Hotel English speaking instruction improve vocational college students' oral English proficiency (fluency, accuracy, and task completion quality) compared to traditional instruction?

RQ2: What is the effect of POA-based instruction on vocational college students' English speaking anxiety?

RQ3: How do vocational college students perceive the POA instructional approach in the Hotel English context, and what specific features do they identify as helpful or challenging?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of POA

The Production-Oriented Approach was initially proposed by Wen Qiufang in 2007 as a response to the persistent problem of "learning-using disconnection" in Chinese foreign language education. Over the subsequent decade, the theory underwent continuous refinement through a research methodology Wen terms "dialectical research" — an iterative process of theoretical development and classroom-based empirical validation. The complete POA theoretical framework, as presented in Wen's 2018 article in *Language Teaching* and elaborated in her 2020 monograph. The Production-Oriented Approach: An Innovative Exploration of Chinese Foreign Language Education Theory, comprises three levels of theoretical constructs: teaching principles, teaching hypotheses, and teaching procedures.

Teaching Principles are as below**.** POA is guided by three overarching principles. The Learning-Centered Principle distinguishes POA from both teacher-centered and purely student-centered approaches. It posits that the ultimate criterion for evaluating instruction is what and how much students learn, not whether the teacher or the student occupies the center of classroom activity. The Learning-Using Integrated Principle directly targets the learning-application gap, insisting that input and output should be "integrated" rather than "sequenced" — that is, learning should be driven by the immediate demands of productive tasks. The Whole-Person Development Principle emphasizes that foreign language instruction should foster not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness, critical thinking, and key competencies such as problem-solving and collaboration.

Teaching Hypotheses are as below**.** Three hypotheses operationalize these principles. The Output-Driven Hypothesis asserts that productive activities (speaking and writing) should serve as both the starting point and the ultimate goal of instruction. When students attempt to produce language before receiving relevant input, they activate prior knowledge, recognize their deficiencies, and become motivated to engage with subsequent learning materials. The Input-Enabled Hypothesis complements the output-driven assumption by specifying that input must be carefully designed to "enable" successful output — that is, to provide the linguistic content, discursive structures, and strategic resources students need to complete their productive tasks. The Selective Learning Hypothesis recognizes that learners cannot process all available input equally; effective instruction guides students to selectively attend to input elements that are most relevant to their immediate output needs, thereby optimizing cognitive load and learning efficiency.

Teaching Procedures are as below**.** These hypotheses are enacted through a three-stage instructional cycle: Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing. In the *Motivating* stage, the teacher presents a communicative scenario and a challenging output task; students attempt the task and recognize their limitations, generating a sense of need. In the Enabling stage, the teacher decomposes the output task into manageable subtasks, provides carefully selected input materials (including linguistic, content, and discursive resources), and guides students through selective learning and practice activities that incrementally build toward task completion. In the Assessing stage, students submit their output products, and assessment is conducted

through Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA), in which teacher and students jointly evaluate selected samples against explicit criteria, with the dual goals of improving output quality and developing assessment literacy.

2.2 Empirical Studies on POA

Since its full articulation, POA has generated a substantial body of empirical research. Early studies focused primarily on college English writing instruction. Wen and her collaborators [2-4] demonstrated that POA-based instruction improved students' writing quality, particularly in terms of task completion and language accuracy, while also enhancing students' learning motivation and autonomous learning awareness. A recent study on IELTS writing instruction [8] found that the POA model effectively enhanced students' writing interest, active learning awareness, and writing ability, particularly in overcoming vocabulary poverty and material shortages, as well as improving language accuracy and expression richness.

More recently, researchers have extended POA to speaking instruction. Studies have applied POA to vocational college English speaking courses using the "Motivating – Enabling – Assessing" framework [9,10], with some integrating digital tools such as the FiF Speaking Training App. Research conducted at Yan'an Vocational and Technical College [7] demonstrated that a four-month POA-based intervention, supported by the FiF app, significantly improved students' oral production accuracy and fluency compared to a control group. Another study at Guangdong AIB Polytechnic College applied POA to business English speaking instruction and found that while POA was generally effective, its effects varied considerably depending on factors such as task design, grouping patterns, input materials, and students' prior proficiency levels — a finding that highlights the importance of contextual adaptation [11] . Research on speaking anxiety has shown that POA can effectively reduce vocational college students' English speaking anxiety [7] by shifting the focus from performance to task completion and by providing structured scaffolding throughout the enabling stage.

However, several important gaps remain in the POA literature. First, while POA has been applied to general speaking instruction, its application to ESP speaking — particularly occupation-specific oral communication — has received limited attention. The handful of existing studies on POA and Hotel English have been either theoretical proposals or small-scale descriptive case studies without rigorous experimental designs [5,6]. Second, the specific ways in which POA's three stages should be operationalized for hotel service scenarios — which involve not just linguistic accuracy but also intercultural sensitivity, service etiquette, and problem-solving under pressure — have not been systematically examined. Third, existing studies have rarely combined quantitative outcome measures (oral test scores) with qualitative process data (student perceptions, anxiety measures) to provide a comprehensive picture of POA's effects. The present study aims to address these gaps by conducting a quasi-experimental study of POA-based Hotel English speaking instruction that integrates multiple data sources and examines both learning outcomes and affective variables.

3. Methodolog

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative outcome measures (oral proficiency tests, anxiety scales) with qualitative process data (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, student reflective journals). The study spanned 14 weeks (one academic semester), with instructional interventions implemented over 12 weeks following a 1-week pretest period and concluding with a 1-week posttest period.

3.2 Participants

Participants were 96 first-year hotel management students from Guizhou Aerospace Vocational and Technical College, enrolled in two parallel sections of the compulsory Hotel English course. The two sections were randomly assigned to conditions: Section A served as the experimental group (POA-based instruction, n=48, 36 female, 12 male) and Section B served as the control group (traditional PPP instruction — Presentation, Practice, Production, n=48, 34 female, 14 male). All participants were native Chinese speakers with no extended overseas English-speaking experience. Their English

proficiency, as measured by their college entrance examination English scores, ranged from 60 to 95 out of 150 M=78.3, SD=10.2, with no significant difference between groups at baseline. The course was a required credit-bearing course meeting twice weekly for 90 minutes per session. All participants provided informed consent, and the study was approved by the institutional research ethics committee.

3.3 Instructional Design

The key innovation of this study lies in the detailed operationalization of the POA framework for hotel-specific speaking scenarios. Table 1 provides an overview of the thematic units covered during the 12-week intervention.

Table 1. Hotel English Thematic Units and POA Design Components

Week	Theme	Motivating Task	Enabling Focus	Assessment Task
1-2	Front Desk: Check-in	Role-play: Handle a guest check-in with special requests	Room types, reservation verification, payment procedures, welcome phrases	Recorded check-in dialogue
3-4	Concierge Services	Respond to guest inquiries about local attractions and transportation	Directional language, recommendation expressions, modal verbs for suggestions	Concierge information script
5-6	Housekeeping Communication	Handle a guest complaint about room cleanliness	Apology strategies, service recovery phrases, room service vocabulary	Complaint resolution dialogue
7-8	Food & Beverage Service	Take a food order with dietary restrictions	Menu vocabulary, clarification questions, special request handling	Restaurant service role-play
9-10	Complaint Handling	Resolve a guest complaint about billing error	Empathetic listening, problem-solving language, follow-up expressions	Complaint resolution recording
11-12	Integrated Review	Multi-scenario hotel simulation (check-in → service request → checkout)	Integrated review of all language functions	Comprehensive hotel service performance

The following sections detail the POA instructional procedure for two representative hotel scenarios: front desk check-in and housekeeping complaint handling. These scenarios were selected because they represent high-frequency, high-stakes communication tasks in hotel operations.

3.3.1 Stage 1: Motivating — front desk check-in scenario

In the motivating stage for the front desk check-in unit, the instructor presented the following authentic communicative scenario:

*Scenario:*You are a front desk receptionist at the "Guizhou International Hotel." A guest, Mr. Johnson, arrives at 2:00 PM for check-in. He has a confirmed reservation for a standard double room for three nights. However, he requests to change to a deluxe king room with a mountain view. He also asks for a late checkout at 2:00 PM on his departure day. You must handle these requests according to hotel policies while maintaining professional hospitality.

Students were asked to work in pairs and attempt the role-play immediately, without any prior language instruction or vocabulary preparation. Their attempts were audio-recorded using their smartphones. After completing the initial role-play, students listened to their own recordings and completed a self-assessment checklist that asked them to identify: (a) what they were able to say, (b) what they wanted to say but could not, (c) where they felt stuck or made errors, and (d) what specific language or strategies they needed to perform the task better. This self-awareness activity served to generate "learning hunger" by making the gap between current ability and task demands explicit and personally relevant.

The instructor then facilitated a whole-class debriefing, eliciting from students the difficulties they encountered. (e.g., "I didn't know how to say 'mountain view' in English," "I didn't know how to politely refuse a request," "I didn't know the procedure for confirming a reservation") These difficulties were recorded on the whiteboard and organized into three categories: **content gaps** (what to say — e.g., hotel policies, room types), language gaps (how to say it — e.g., polite request forms, conditional sentences), and strategy gaps (how to handle the interaction — e.g., how to say 'no' without offending the guest). The motivating stage concluded with the instructor explicitly stating the learning objectives for the unit, framed in terms of bridging these specific gaps.

3.3.2 Stage 2: Enabling — front desk check-in

scenario

The enabling stage was designed to provide precisely the input that students had identified as needed, structured through three scaffolded subtasks of increasing complexity.

Subtask 1: Core Vocabulary and Expressions (Content and Language). The instructor provided a handout containing the essential vocabulary and expressions organized by communicative function:

Function	Target Language
Greeting	"Good afternoon, sir/madam. Welcome to Guizhou International Hotel."
Reservation confirmation	"May I have your name, please? / Could I see your confirmation number?"
Room type inquiry	"You have a reservation for a standard double room. Would you like to upgrade to a deluxe king room with a mountain view for an additional 150 RMB per night?"
Special request handling	"Let me check availability for a late checkout. I can extend checkout to 2:00 PM at no additional charge."
Polite refusal	"I'm afraid the deluxe king room is fully booked for tonight. However, I can offer you a mountain view room for your remaining two nights."
Check-in completion	"May I have your credit card for incidentals? Here is your room key. Breakfast is served from 6:30 to 10:00 on the second floor."

Students practiced these expressions through choral repetition, pair drilling, and gap-fill exercises. The instructor provided pronunciation correction and modeled prosody appropriate for professional service interactions (warm but not overly familiar, polite but not subservient).

*Subtask 2: Discursive Structure (Strategy).*Students were introduced to the typical discourse structure of a hotel check-in interaction:

1) Opening — Greeting and welcome
2) Identification — Confirm guest identity and reservation
3) Room Assignment — Present room options, handle upgrade requests
4) Special Requests — Address late checkout, extra beds, etc.
5) Payment and Documentation — Credit card, registration card
6) Closing — Room key, directions, farewell

Students analyzed a model dialogue that exemplified this structure, identifying the function of each utterance. They then practiced sequencing the expressions from Subtask 1 into this discursive framework.

Subtask 3: Integrated Role-Play Practice. Working in pairs, students practiced the complete check-in interaction multiple times, gradually reducing their reliance on notes. The instructor circulated to provide individualized feedback. Each pair's final practice attempt was recorded, and students were asked to listen to their recording and self-correct against a checklist of success criteria that included: (a) greeting and welcoming the guest appropriately, (b) confirming reservation information accurately, (c) handling the room upgrade request clearly, (d) addressing the late checkout request, (e) using polite and professional language throughout, and (f) completing the check-in efficiently.

3.3.3 Stage 3: Assessing — front desk check-in scenario

The assessment stage employed Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA). The instructor randomly selected three student recordings from the previous week (with student consent) and prepared them for in-class assessment. In a 30-minute whole-class session, the instructor played the first recording and paused after each discourse segment. Students evaluated the performance using a four-criteria rubric developed collaboratively by the instructor and students at the beginning of the course:

Criterion	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Adequate (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Task completion	All task elements addressed fully	Most task elements addressed	Some task elements missing	Few or no task elements addressed
Fluency	Smooth, natural flow; minimal hesitation	Generally smooth; occasional pauses	Noticeable hesitation; frequent pauses	Halting; many long pauses
Accuracy	Grammatically accurate; appropriate vocabulary	Minor errors; meaning clear	Noticeable errors; meaning sometimes unclear	Frequent errors; meaning often unclear
Professionalism	Warm, polite, confident service manner	Generally professional tone	Somewhat mechanical or uncertain	Inappropriate or unclear manner

After the class discussed each recording, the instructor summarized key strengths and areas for improvement, relating them back to the learning objectives established in the motivating

stage. Students were then asked to submit their own best recording for formal assessment, along with a brief self-reflection on how they had addressed the areas for improvement identified during the collaborative assessment session.

3.3.4 Illustrative example: Housekeeping complaint handling

To further illustrate the POA operationalization for a different hotel service scenario, the housekeeping communication unit is briefly described.

Motivating Stage**:** Students were presented with a video clip (audio removed) showing a guest calling housekeeping to complain that the room was not cleaned properly — the bed sheets were not changed, the bathroom floor was wet, and towels were missing. Students were asked to improvise the housekeeper's side of the telephone conversation. After their initial attempt, they reflected on difficulties such as how to apologize professionally, how to explain the situation, and how to promise corrective action.

Enabling Stage**:** The instructor decomposed the task into subtasks: (1) apology expressions at different levels of formality, (2) explanation language ("I'm very sorry for the inconvenience. There seems to have been a miscommunication with our cleaning team."), (3) action commitment language ("I will personally bring fresh towels to your room immediately and have housekeeping reclean the bathroom within 10 minutes."), and (4) follow-up language ("May I call you back in 15 minutes to ensure everything is to your satisfaction?"). Students engaged with input materials including authentic hotel complaint-handling scripts and practiced each subtask progressively.

Assessing Stage**:** Using the same TSCA procedure, students evaluated sample complaint-handling dialogues against criteria including empathy expression, problem resolution effectiveness, and maintenance of professional composure under pressure.

3.4 Control Group Instruction

The control group received traditional PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) instruction covering the same Hotel English content. In a typical PPP lesson, the instructor first presented new vocabulary and sentence patterns through explanation and model dialogues (Presentation). Students then engaged in controlled practice activities, such as repetition drills, gap-fills, and substitution exercises (Practice). Finally, students were asked to produce the language in a communicative activity, usually a role-play similar to the one used in the POA group (Production). However, unlike the POA group, the control group did not experience an initial motivating task before input, nor did they engage in selective learning or collaborative assessment.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Oral Proficiency Test.A Hotel English speaking test was developed specifically for this study, based on the College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) framework but adapted to hotel service contexts. The test consisted of three tasks: (1) a short individual presentation describing a hotel service procedure (e.g., "Explain how you would handle a guest's lost luggage"), (2) a paired role-play of a hotel service scenario, and (3) a problem-solving task requiring the student to respond to an unexpected guest request. The same test was administered as pretest (Week 1) and posttest (Week 14), but with different scenario content to prevent practice effects. All tests were audio-recorded and rated by two independent raters — both experienced English instructors who were blind to group assignment — using a rubric adapted from CET-SET, assessing fluency (0-10), accuracy (0-10), and task completion quality (0-10). Inter-rater reliability was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$).

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is adopted**.**The Chinese version of Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was administered at pretest and posttest. The scale consists of 33 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Sample items include "I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students" and "I get nervous when I don't understand every word the teacher says." The FLCAS has demonstrated high reliability in Chinese vocational college contexts (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$ in previous studies). In the present study, Cronbach's α was 0.91 at pretest and 0.93 at posttest.

Semi-Structured Interviews are adopted**.**At the conclusion of the study, 12 students from the experimental group (selected to represent a range of proficiency levels) participated in individual semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 20-25 minutes each. The

interview protocol explored students' overall impressions of the POA approach, specific aspects they found helpful or challenging, comparisons with their previous English learning experiences, and suggestions for improvement. Interviews were conducted in Chinese, audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Student Reflective Journals are adopted**.** Students in the experimental group maintained weekly reflective journals, responding to three prompts: (1) What did I learn this week that I found useful? (2) What difficulties did I encounter? (3) How did I try to overcome these difficulties? Journals were collected weekly and analyzed for recurring themes.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare pretest scores between groups, confirming baseline equivalence. Repeated-measures ANOVA was used to examine the main effects of time (pretest vs. posttest), group (experimental vs. control), and the time × group interaction on oral proficiency subscales (fluency, accuracy, task completion) and FLCAS scores. Effect sizes (partial η^2) were reported. Qualitative data from interviews and journals were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure, consisting of familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, and theme definition.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Effects of POA on Oral English Proficiency (RQ1)

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the oral proficiency pretest and posttest scores for both groups.

Repeated-measures ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of time on all three measures (F values ranging from 45.27 to 68.34, all $p < 0.001$), indicating that both groups improved from pretest to posttest. More importantly, a significant time × group interaction was found for fluency [$F(1, 94) = 22.15$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.19$], accuracy [$F(1, 94) = 14.82$, $p = 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.14$], and task completion [$F(1, 94) = 25.63$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.21$]. These results indicate that the experimental group's improvement was significantly greater than that of the control group on all three measures, with medium to large effect sizes.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Oral Proficiency Measures

Measure	Group	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Mean Gain
Fluency (0-10)	Experimental	4.23 (1.21)	7.15 (1.08)	+2.92
	Control	4.31 (1.18)	5.42 (1.25)	+1.11
Accuracy (0-10)	Experimental	4.57 (1.34)	7.08 (1.22)	+2.51
	Control	4.49 (1.29)	5.67 (1.35)	+1.18
Task Completion (0-10)	Experimental	4.08 (1.42)	7.42 (1.15)	+3.34
	Control	4.15 (1.38)	5.83 (1.41)	+1.68

The largest effect was observed for task completion quality. This finding aligns with POA's fundamental orientation toward authentic task performance. Unlike traditional instruction, in which language forms are practiced in isolation and only later applied to tasks, POA embeds all learning within the task framework from the outset. The motivating stage clarifies the task requirements, the enabling stage builds task-relevant competencies incrementally, and the assessment stage evaluates task performance directly. This "task-forward" design appears to have been particularly effective in helping vocational college students understand what constitutes successful task completion in hotel service contexts and develop the integrated skills needed to achieve it.

The improvement in fluency (a gain of 2.92 points in the experimental group compared to 1.11 in the control group) is consistent with findings from previous POA speaking studies, such as the Yan'an Vocational and Technical College study [7], which reported enhanced oral production fluency after POA-based instruction. The present results extend this finding to the ESP context of Hotel English, suggesting that the output-driven mechanism of POA — which forces students to produce language repeatedly throughout the instructional cycle — is effective regardless of the specific content domain.

The improvement in accuracy, while somewhat smaller in effect size than fluency or task completion, is nonetheless notable. One might hypothesize that an approach emphasizing production over form would sacrifice accuracy, but the opposite occurred in this study. A plausible explanation is that the selective

learning hypothesis — guiding students to attend only to input relevant to their immediate output needs — reduces cognitive overload, allowing students to focus their attentional resources on mastering a manageable set of forms to a high level of accuracy, rather than being exposed to a large volume of input without clear priorities.

4.2 Effects of POA on English Speaking Anxiety (RQ2)

Table 3 presents the FLCAS results.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for FLCAS Scores (5-Point Scale)

Group	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Mean Change
Experimental	3.48 (0.62)	2.41 (0.53)	-1.07
Control	3.51 (0.59)	3.12 (0.61)	-0.39

Repeated-measures ANOVA showed a significant time × group interaction for FLCAS scores [$F(1, 94) = 31.46$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.25$]. The experimental group's anxiety decreased substantially from M=3.48 to M=2.41, while the control group showed a modest decrease from M=3.51 to M=3.12.

This finding is consistent with recent research demonstrating POA's effectiveness in reducing vocational college students' English speaking anxiety [7]. The present study provides additional evidence that the anxiety-reducing effects of POA generalize to the ESP context of Hotel English. Several mechanisms may explain this effect. First, the motivating stage's initial "productive failure" — while potentially anxiety-provoking in the moment — serves to normalize difficulty. Students discover that even the more proficient among them struggle with authentic tasks, which reduces the perception that difficulty is a sign of personal inadequacy. Second, the enabling stage provides extensive scaffolding and practice before high-stakes assessment, allowing students to build confidence incrementally. Third, the collaborative assessment process shifts the focus from individual performance evaluation to collective problem-solving, reducing the threat value of being evaluated.

One student's interview comment illustrates this experience:

"Before this course, whenever the teacher asked us to speak English, my heart would start racing and my mind would go blank. But with POA, the first time we tried the task, the teacher said it was okay to make mistakes — we were just supposed to see what we couldn't do. Then we got all the help we needed. By the time we had to do the final recording, I had practiced so many times that it didn't feel scary anymore."(Student 7, interview transcript)

4.3 Student Perceptions of POA (RQ3)

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts and reflective journals revealed four major themes regarding students' perceptions of the POA approach.

Theme 1: Authenticity as a Motivational Driver is important**.** Students consistently reported that the hotel-specific scenarios felt "real" and "relevant" to their future careers, which increased their engagement. Unlike generic English speaking tasks ("talking about my hobbies"), the hotel service scenarios had clear professional relevance. As one student wrote in her journal:

"When I practiced handling a guest complaint, I could picture myself actually working at a hotel front desk. This wasn't just 'learning English' — it was learning how to do my job."(Student 23, Week 8 journal)

This finding aligns with the ESP principle that domain-specific authenticity enhances motivation and transfer. It also supports Wen's [1,3] emphasis on designing motivating tasks that have "potential communicative value" — tasks that students can envision themselves performing in real future contexts.

Theme 2: The Value of "Failure" in the Motivating Stage matters**.** Counterintuitively, many students identified the initial motivating task — in which they were set up to experience difficulty — as one of the most valuable aspects of the approach. Rather than being demoralized, students found that experiencing the gap between their current ability and task demands made the subsequent learning feel purposeful. One student explained:

"In traditional English classes, the teacher would teach us vocabulary and sentences first, and then we would practice. But I never really understood why I needed to learn those specific words. With POA, I tried the task first and failed, so when the teacher later taught me the words, I thought, 'Oh, that's exactly what I needed!' and I remembered them much better."(Student 35, interview)

This qualitative evidence supports the output-driven hypothesis at the level of learner perception: students recognized that productive failure enhanced their subsequent learning

efficiency.

Theme 3: Scaffolding and the Reduction of Cognitive Load work**.** Students appreciated the way the enabling stage broke down complex tasks into manageable subtasks. Rather than being expected to produce a complete hotel service interaction immediately after input presentation, students worked through vocabulary, discursive structure, and integrated practice as separate, scaffolded steps. This gradual release of responsibility reduced feelings of being overwhelmed, particularly for lower-proficiency students. As one student noted:

"I used to get lost when the teacher said 'Now do a role-play.' There was too much to think about at once. But with the subtasks, first I just learned the words, then I learned the order of what to say, and only then did I put it all together. That made it possible for me to succeed."(Student 12, interview)

Theme 4: Challenges with Collaborative Assessment could train the students well**.** While students valued the TSCA process overall, several identified challenges. Some students felt uncomfortable having their recordings played for the whole class, even with anonymity maintained. Others noted that the collaborative assessment sessions were time-consuming, sometimes limiting the amount of individual feedback they received. These challenges suggest that TSCA may require careful implementation, including ensuring that selected samples represent a range of performance levels, not only errors, and that students are adequately prepared for peer evaluation. One student commented:

"Listening to other people's recordings was helpful, but sometimes I wished the teacher could listen to my own recording and give me personal feedback. There wasn't always time for that." (Student 41, interview)

This finding is consistent with Wen's [4] own recognition that TSCA requires significant classroom time and that teachers may need to balance collaborative assessment with individual feedback, perhaps by using technology (e.g., voice message with personalized comments) to extend feedback beyond class time.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the application of the Production-Oriented Approach to Hotel English speaking instruction in a Chinese vocational college context. The findings provide empirical support for POA's effectiveness across three outcome dimensions. First, POA-based instruction produced significantly greater improvements in oral English proficiency — particularly in fluency and task completion quality — compared to traditional PPP instruction. Second, POA significantly reduced students' English speaking anxiety, with the experimental group showing a decrease of over one point on the 5-point FLCAS scale compared to a modest decrease in the control group. Third, students perceived POA positively, highlighting the motivational value of authentic tasks, the learning efficiency enabled by experiencing "productive failure" in the motivating stage, and the cognitive manageability provided by scaffolded subtasks in the enabling stage, while also noting challenges related to the time demands of collaborative assessment.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

These findings contribute to POA theory in several ways. First, they extend the empirical evidence base for POA from general English and EAP contexts to ESP — specifically, occupation-specific oral communication for the hospitality industry. This suggests that POA's core mechanisms (output-driven, input-enabled, selective learning) are robust across different content domains, provided that the motivating tasks are appropriately contextualized to learners' professional futures. Second, the results provide support for the learning-using integrated principle in an ESP context. The transformation of inert knowledge into productive competence — a persistent challenge in ESP instruction — appears to be facilitated by POA's task-embedded design, in which input is never presented without immediate relevance to an output task. Third, the anxiety-reduction finding suggests that POA's affective benefits may be as important as its cognitive benefits, particularly for vocational college students who often enter English courses with high anxiety and low self-efficacy. This aligns with calls within POA research to attend more systematically to affective variables as both mediators and outcomes of instruction.

5.3 Practical Implications for Hotel English Instruction

For Hotel English instructors in vocational colleges, this study offers several actionable recommendations. First, begin each unit with a motivating task that simulates a real hotel service scenario. This initial productive attempt — even if imperfect — should be treated as a diagnostic tool to identify learning needs and generate motivation, not as an assessment of current ability. Second, design enabling subtasks that progressively build toward the final output, ensuring that each subtask provides scaffolding for the next. For lower-proficiency students, this might mean more extensive practice at the vocabulary and sentence level before moving to discourse-level integration. Third, implement Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment by selecting a small number of representative student outputs for whole-class evaluation. To address the time constraints identified by students, instructors might combine in-class collaborative assessment of selected samples with technology-mediated individual feedback (e.g., audio comments, annotated rubrics) for all students. Fourth, explicitly teach the discourse structure of hotel service interactions — not just vocabulary and grammar. Students benefit from understanding the typical sequence of moves in a check-in, complaint handling, or concierge interaction, as this reduces the cognitive load of real-time production.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted at a single vocational college with a relatively small sample N=96. While the sample size was adequate for detecting the reported effects, the generalizability of findings to other vocational colleges with different student populations, regional contexts, or curricular structures remains to be established. Second, the study duration was one academic semester (14 weeks). Longer-term studies are needed to assess whether POA's effects are sustained over time and whether the initial gains in fluency and task completion continue to develop with continued POA instruction. Third, while the study employed a quasi-experimental design with a control group, random assignment of individual students to conditions was not possible due to intact class schedules. However, pretest equivalence between groups was confirmed, and the same instructor taught both groups to control for teacher effects. Fourth, the study did not include a delayed posttest to measure retention of learning outcomes. Future research should incorporate delayed testing to assess the durability of POA's effects.

Future research directions include: (1) investigating the application of POA to other ESP domains in vocational colleges, such as Business English, Tourism English, and Medical English; (2) examining the moderating role of prior proficiency level — does POA benefit lower-proficiency students more than higher-proficiency students, or vice versa?; (3) exploring technology-enhanced POA designs, such as AI-powered speaking practice tools for the enabling stage or automated feedback systems for assessment; and (4) conducting longitudinal studies tracking vocational graduates' English use in actual workplace settings to assess the transfer of POA-developed competencies to real hotel service contexts.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

The challenge of preparing vocational college students for English-medium communication in the hospitality industry is not merely a matter of teaching more vocabulary or providing more practice opportunities. It requires a fundamental reorientation of instruction toward authentic, output-driven learning that bridges the gap between classroom knowledge and workplace performance. The Production-Oriented Approach, developed by Professor Wen Qiufang as a Chinese indigenous theory of foreign language education, offers precisely such a reorientation. The present study has demonstrated that POA — when carefully operationalized for hotel-specific scenarios — improves vocational students' oral fluency and task completion quality, reduces speaking anxiety, and is perceived by students as engaging and effective. As China continues to expand its vocational education system and align it with the demands of a modern service economy, pedagogical innovations like POA will play an increasingly important role in preparing students for successful careers in internationalized industries. The challenge for researchers and practitioners alike is to continue refining and adapting POA to the specific needs of vocational learners, ensuring that the "production" toward which instruction is oriented is not merely classroom output but genuine, effective communication in the

workplaces of tomorrow.

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