

## A Literature Review of Studies on Production-oriented Approach (POA) in China

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### ABSTRACT

The Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is a novel teaching approach with Chinese characteristics that is also one of China's research hotspots in the field of English instruction. The purpose of this study is to investigate the theory's future development and challenges based on the research state of POA in China, in order to promote POA's application in a wider range. The researcher retrieved academic journals, master's and doctoral dissertations from CNKI regarding POA from 2016 to 2020 and discussed its application fields, research methods, and research contents in this study. The findings demonstrate that: 1) Chinese researchers' research on POA has advanced significantly in the last five years, with an overall increasing trend in the number of studies. 2) POA's research methodologies mostly consist of non-empirical and empirical research. 3) POA's research focuses mostly on the development of theoretical systems, teaching effectiveness research, teaching reform practice, and teaching compilation and usage. Simultaneously, this study outlines the present research on POA in China's limitations and evaluates its future development prospects.

### 1. Introduction

Chinese linguistic professor Wen Qiufang proposed the Production-oriented Approach (POA), a theoretical method for foreign language teaching with Chinese elements. This theory has been in development for more than 14 years. Because learning and application are separated in China's English education, the traditional "input-output" phase is replaced with a new process of "output driven-input facilitated-output assessment" and a teaching concept of learning and application integration is proposed based on this new theory (Wen, 2015). POA is primarily designed for intermediate and advanced English learners who want to improve their productivity. It creates a range of student-centred learning tasks and guides students through the three-teaching links of driving, facilitating, and evaluating in order to increase the efficiency of English classroom teaching and students' capacity to apply English.

Since the POA was proposed, China has seen a surge in research on this theory. Because the theory and practice of POA are constantly evolving, it is essential to keep records of the changes and trends in research based on the theory. As a result, this paper employs the method of literature content analysis to systematically collect relevant POA literature in a Chinese database named *China National Knowledge Infrastructure* (CNKI) from 2016 to 2020, summarizes the research findings, forecasts the development trend, and identifies flaws and problems in order to promote POA research, development, and application.

### 2. Literature Review

POA is presented as a solution to the problems with English classroom instruction in Chinese higher education. POA differs from standard English teaching methods in that it begins with "output" and finishes with "output." Students can actively participate in classroom teaching activities in the POA teaching mode, resulting in a true blend of learning and application. Throughout its

development, the POA system has been continually enhanced. It has gone through six development phases since 2007, as shown in Table 1. (Wen, 2018).

Table 1 The Phases of POA development

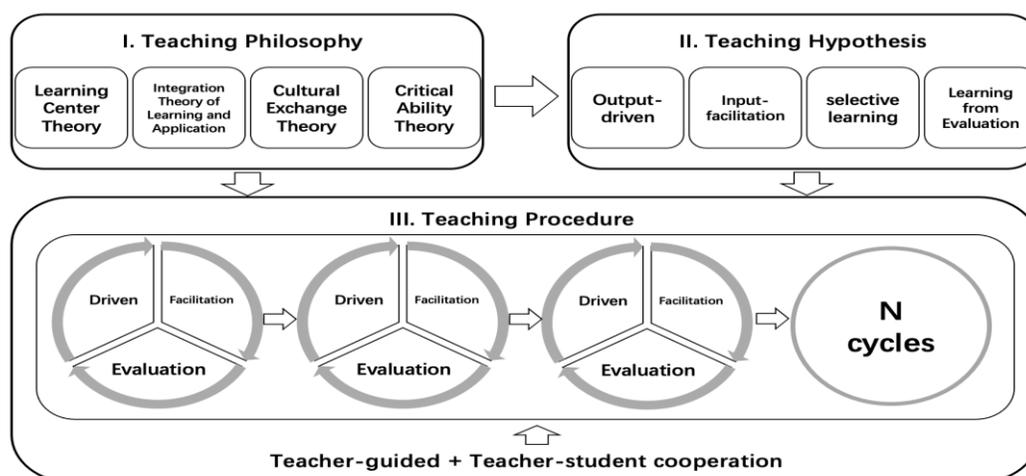
	Phase	Development track	Time
1	Warm-up Period	Output-driven	2007-2013
2	Embryonic period	Output-driven and Input-facilitation	2013-2014
3	Formative period	POA system	2015-2016
4	Revision Period	First revision of POA	2016-2017
5	Second revision period	Second revision of POA	2017-2018
6	Latest version period	Latest version of POA	2019-now

The prototype of POA is Wen Qiufang's "output-driven hypothesis," which is based on Swain's output-driven hypothesis and advocated for English curriculum reform (Wen, 2008). Following that, it progressed to the embryonic stage. Wen Qiufang investigates the adaptability of the output-driven hypothesis in College English teaching and discovers that the hypothesis only emphasizes the importance of output while leaving the role of input undefined, making it difficult for teachers to deal with the relationship between input and output in the classroom (Sun, 2016). As a result, at the 7th China International Conference on English Education in October of the same year, Wen Qiufang (2014) amended this hypothesis as "output-driven and input-facilitated hypothesis" and dubbed it "Production-oriented Approach." POA's theoretical approach now consists of three components: teaching philosophy, teaching hypothesis, and teaching procedure.

Professor Wen's team changed the theoretical system of POA for the first time in 2017 based on a comparison of international theories and an analysis of POA's Chinese characteristics. The concept of "learning by evaluation" has been included, as well as the interactivity and circularity of teaching links, and the terminology "teacher-intermediated" has been changed to "teacher-guided." The POA went through a modification process in 2018. The cultural exchange theory was introduced to the teaching material in the teaching philosophy section, and the "whole person education theory" was replaced with the "critical capacity theory" for the training objectives. The three links of "driven-facilitation-evaluation" are split into little internal cycle and overall large cycle in the teaching method section, and the teaching procedure of teacher-student interaction under the supervision of teachers is stressed (Wen, 2018). As can be seen, the theoretical system of POA has been in a constant state of progress and refinement.

The newly revised theoretical system of POA is depicted in Figure 1, which is divided into three parts: teaching philosophy, teaching hypothesis, and teaching procedure. The teaching philosophy is divided into four sections: 1) Firstly, learning center theory is proposed as a replacement for "teacher-centered theory" and "learner-centered theory," emphasizing that the goal of instructional activities is to help students learn and accomplish. 2) Second, in light of the problem of "learning and application separation" in English classroom instruction, the theory of "learning and application integration" is proposed, which promotes the simultaneous occurrence and integration of "learning" and "application." 3) Thirdly, the theory of cultural exchange aims to help students correctly deal with the relationship between the target culture and the local culture. 4) Fourthly, the critical ability theory, which prepares students to "address complicated problems in an uncertain and complex setting" (Chu, 2016).

Figure 1 POA Theoretical System



The direction and action objective of the teaching hypothesis and teaching technique are determined by POA's teaching philosophy. The teaching hypothesis is divided into four parts: 1) Firstly, the output-driven hypothesis, which claims that "output" is not only the driving force but also the goal of language acquisition, and proposes a new teaching order of "output-input-output" (Qi & Shi, 2016). 2) Secondly, the input-driven theory stresses the importance of the input serving the explicit output task. 3) Thirdly, the selective learning hypothesis emphasizes the critical learning oriented to achieve the output goal. 4) Fourthly, Learning by evaluation, which advocates the combination of evaluation and learning.

The teaching hypothesis of POA is the theoretical basis and test object of the teaching procedure. The teaching procedure is a series of circulation chains composed of driving, promoting and evaluating. The driving link is mainly through the output task to make students aware of their own shortcomings so as to mobilize their enthusiasm. The purpose of the facilitating link is to provide scaffolding for the output of students. Real-time and delayed evaluations are both used in the evaluation process. Simultaneously, a novel evaluation approach based on "teacher-student cooperation" is offered (Wen, 2016). The teaching process should not only fully reflect the teaching philosophy and hypothesis, but also serve as a foundation for evaluating the efficacy of the teaching hypothesis in practice (Wen, 2018).

### **3. Methodology**

The relevant research on POA in China from 2016 to 2020 is analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method in this study. This study utilizes the most authoritative CNKI database in China as the data source and employs its superior retrieval capability to improve the research's reliability. To begin, the literature type is set to "Journal," and the subjects are "Production-oriented Approach," "output-driven hypothesis," and "output-driven and input-facilitated hypothesis." The time frame is from 2016 to 2020.

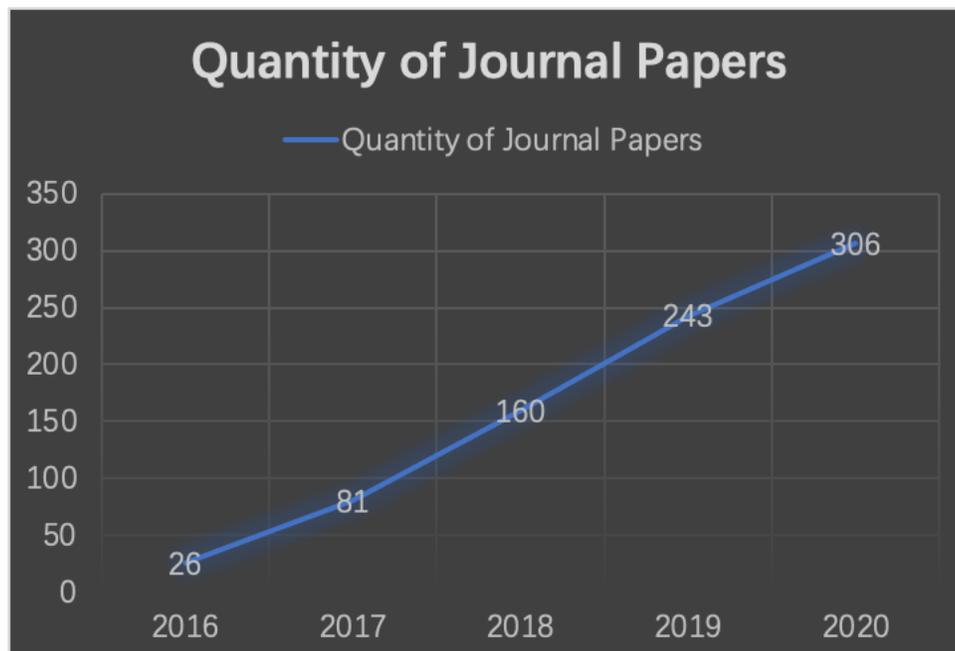
In light of the ongoing development of POA theory and practice, this study attempts to identify POA research papers published in Chinese academic journals over the last five years, investigate the overall trend of POA research, and clarify the research status of POA from four perspectives: application fields, research methods, research hotspots, and research deficiencies, as well as look ahead to the future. It also serves as a source of information and inspiration for the practice and study of POA in China.

### **4. Findings**

#### **4.1 General Research Status of POA**

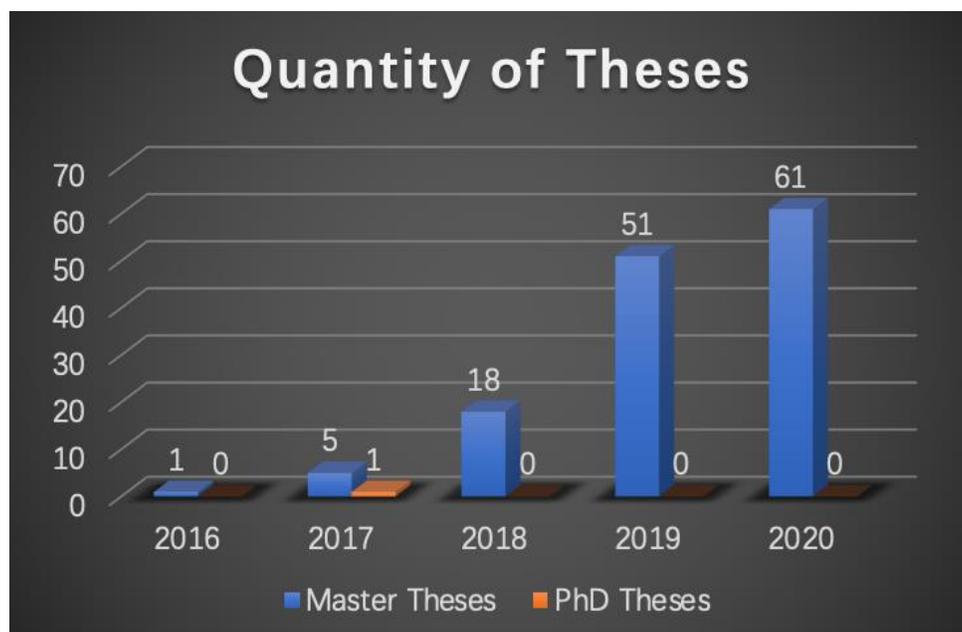
This research utilized the keyword "Production-oriented Approach" to look for the trend change in POA over the last five years, and the literature query node is December 30, 2020. There were 816 journal articles and 137 doctoral and master's theses found, with 136 master's theses and only one doctorate thesis. As shown in Figure 2, the quantity of journal papers has increased dramatically since Professor Wen Qiufang first suggested the POA in 2015, with the quantity of papers on the POA increasing the most from 2018 to 2019, indicating an overall rising trend.

Figure 2 Quantity of Journal Papers



Since 2016, there has been many master theses on POA, as shown in Figure 3. In 2017, the quantity of theses started to rise, and one PhD thesis was published. From 2018 to 2019, the quantity of doctorate and master's theses on POA climbed the greatest, and this trend maintained from 2019 to 2020. The total number of research studies has likewise increased.

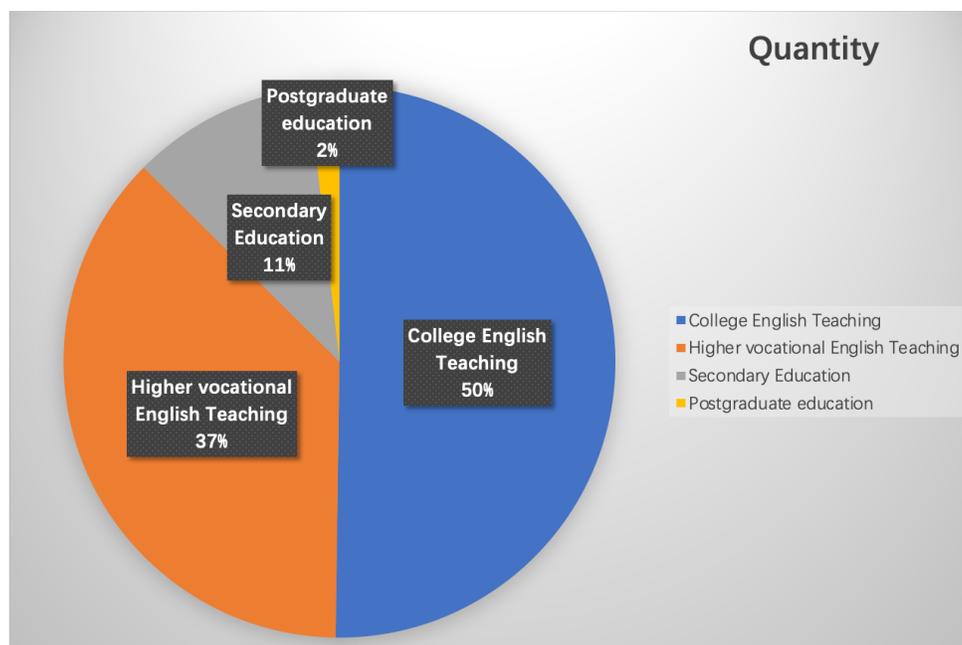
Figure 3 Quantity of Master and PhD Theses



#### 4.2 Application Fields of POA

As illustrated in Figure 4, the POA is primarily employed in college English teaching, higher vocational English teaching, secondary education and postgraduate English teaching. The relevant achievements in College English teaching occupy an absolute proportion because the POA started in the sphere of College English teaching. The POA tries to address the problem of "learning and application separation" in English classes. It has gradually been implemented in higher vocational English education and secondary English education. In addition, some academics use this teaching style to teach graduate students.

Figure 4 Research fields of POA



### **4.3 Main Research Methodology of POA**

Non-empirical research and empirical research are the two main types of research approaches used by POA. The theory and practice of POA are mostly introduced through non-empirical research. In empirical research, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods accounts for the largest proportion. Experimental research is used to collect data to test the teaching effect of the POA, supplemented by questionnaires and interviews to understand the students' attitude towards the POA. It should be noted out that the POA has only been created for more than ten years. Both the theoretical foundation and the teaching methodologies are still under development.

### **4.4 Research Hotspots of POA**

#### **4.4.1 Introduction of POA Theory and Method**

Wen Qiufang, the proposer and promoter of the teaching method, provides the most fruitful introduction to the theory and method of POA, with a total of 10 papers, including elaborating the theoretical system of POA (Wen, 2015), introducing the new evaluation methods of POA creation, analyzing the Chinese characteristics of POA (Wen, 2017), and launching new evaluation methods of POA. Furthermore, she used the dialectical research method (Wen, 2017) to test the validity of POA and its application in the field of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) (Wen, 2018). Sun Fengguo (2016) discussed the construction and development of the POA theoretical system in his interview with Wen Qiufang. Besides that, Deng Hailong (2018) compared POA to TBLT in terms of teaching philosophy, teaching hypothesis, and teaching procedure, emphasizing the benefits of POA.

#### **4.4.2 Verification of the Effectiveness of POA in English Teaching**

Three categories of study have been conducted on the effectiveness of POA. The first category is to assess POA's overall teaching effectiveness. Zhang Lingli (2017), for instance, established the theoretical system of POA and conducted an empirical study to establish its efficiency. The second category is the investigation of the impact on English ability (such as listening, speaking, reading and writing). Fan Zucheng (2019) investigated the use of the POA in the teaching of English reading. He claimed that using the POA in the teaching of College English critical reading may improve the traditional reading teaching technique, better mix output and input, and increase the application value of classroom teaching. Zhang Wenjuan (2017) shown in a two-week teaching trial that the POA can greatly increase students' writing level, particularly their mastery of the target language in the writing process, as well as their interest in English writing. The third category is research aimed at strengthening humanistic qualities and critical thinking abilities. Tian Yanyan (2015) demonstrated that the teaching technique is conducive to developing students' critical thinking capacity and classroom learning efficiency based on student perspectives. Some scholars and teachers attempt to apply POA to classroom teaching from the perspective of short-term empirical study. To realize the integration of learning and application, use output tasks to drive learning and input learning to promote output. Xue Xiaohua (2017) implemented POA in an English majors' comprehensive skills class and created an output-driven teaching link in the classroom. The practice has demonstrated that students' learning initiative has improved, that they can actively participate in classroom activities and evaluation, and that the teaching effect is satisfactory.

#### **4.4.3 Research on POA in Non-English Language Teaching**

Although the foundation of POA theory is intended for college English curriculum reform that is appropriate for advanced English learners, scholars have discovered that POA is universal in the field of language education through practical proof. Scholars have also discussed and conducted a practical study on the feasibility and efficiency of this teaching style in other foreign language courses. Li Yi (2016) used the POA teaching method in vocabulary teaching in TCFL and discovered that the POA teaching organization had a beneficial impact on adult second language acquisition (SLA). Hou Lei (2015) examined and expanded on the viability of applying the "Learning Center Theory" to disciplines such as law, economics, and education. Dong Xixiao (2019) applied POA to Romanian language teaching, using junior students of the Romanian language major at Beijing Foreign Studies University as the teaching object to carry out the research, which demonstrated that applying POA to non-lingual language teaching is both necessary and feasible. Zhan Xia (2019) altered existing German teaching materials, created POA-based facilitation activities, explored how to create effective facilitation activities in German education, and made ideas for closing the facilitation gap. Shao Ying (2019) modified existing Malaysian textbooks, addressed how to create the driving link, proposed design concepts, design principles, and particular methods, and shown via practice that POA is suited for the adaptation of non-lingua franca textbooks. Wang Bo (2019) used POA to teach Korean grammar in the freshmen classes. Teachers and kids are generally favorable about it. Jiang Xiaoxiao (2019) altered Sinhalese textbooks based on the Poa theory, thinking that this theory can lead the development of non-lingual textbooks for freshmen classes. POA was employed in the teaching of audio-visual language in Indonesia by Wang Dandan (Wang, 2019). POA has been demonstrated in practice to be appropriate for advanced Indonesian classes.

#### 4.4.4 Application of POA in Teaching Materials Compilation

The research on POA teaching materials focuses mostly on two elements. 1) First, conduct a textbook compilation research. Chang Xiaoling (2017), guided by the POA, examined the compilation process of *New Generation College English* and proposed a textbook compilation style of "teaching theory action research two-wheel drive." Guijing (2018) completed the POA processing of comprehensive Chinese teaching materials in TCFL. 2) The second point to mention is the utilization of educational materials. In 2017, the second issue of *China Foreign Language Education* published five papers on "POA and the use of teaching materials" to investigate the motivation and efficacy of using teaching materials from various viewpoints. Based on the *New Generation College English* comprehensive course's concepts and practices: Wen Qiufang (2017) provided a theoretical framework for instructional materials usage and evaluation. The approach of establishing and evaluating output objectives based on instructional materials was defined by Sun Shuguang (2017). Qiu Lin (2017) investigated how input items are selected and transformed. After implementing the Poa teaching experiment, Bi Zheng (2017) focused on evaluating the achievement of output targets. Zhang Lingli (2017) examined the utilization of POA teaching materials in the classroom for students of various levels.

#### 4.5 The Limitations of POA Research

##### 4.5.1 Insufficient POA Empirical Research and Single Research Method

According to the CNKI database, the majority of the literature focus on the analysis and debate of how POA theory is coupled with English curriculum development or in a theoretical sense. There are a lot of theoretical studies on POA theory, however, there are not much empirical research. Practice is the only way to test the theory, and theory perfection is inextricably linked to practice verification. The theoretical system can only be enhanced gradually by popularizing it and adopting the teaching practice and dialectical evaluation of globally authority colleges and research institutions.

POA's current empirical study mostly use a research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research, with test, questionnaire, interview, classroom observation, and teaching reflection report as the primary data collection methods. It is difficult to show typical learner behaviors and traits due to a lack of in-depth case studies, narrative studies, and action studies. Few studies take into account individual characteristics among students, such as gender, age, foreign language ability, and other variables. Furthermore, the empirical research frequently ignores the corresponding challenges in teaching practice, making it difficult to demonstrate that POA is conducive to students' language ability progress.

##### 4.5.2 Lack of the Evaluation System of POA

According to a review of the literature, the majority of studies focus on the application of POA to writing, listening, and speaking instruction, with only a few concentrating on the POA evaluation system. Students' output will be frustrated, and the quality of output will be difficult to ensure, according to relevant instructional practice. If only students are forced to create without providing effective and timely feedback, students' output will be frustrated (Yang, 2015). POA is a teaching style that focuses on the output task, and the evaluation should be concentrated as well. The standard evaluation methodology, on the other hand, cannot completely reflect Poa's teaching effect and students' learning capabilities. As a result, developing a matching assessment system is very important and worth studying in order to completely and objectively measure the success of POA training.

##### 4.5.3 Shortage of Research of POA Based on Blended teaching

Some studies have found that blended teaching mode has significantly altered the environment of language learning, as well as the method of language teaching. There are positive influences, whether it is a psychological aspect such as language learning, vocabulary understanding and mastery, or language learners' attitude and motivation (Deng, 2018). Currently, there is some research on the POA based on blended teaching mode. Wen Qiufang (2015) pointed out that the output-driven link can be converted into a video or a micro class, allowing students to learn ahead of time. Micro classes, according to Yang Lifang (2015), have a bigger advantage than standard teaching modes. However, the current study is limited to POA's micro-course design and its use in a flipped classroom setting. There is currently a significant gap in the exploration of blended teaching assisting POA as a teaching style.

##### 4.5.4 Lack of the Research of Teachers' Role Based on POA

In contrast to traditional classroom English teachers, under the guidance of POA theory, teachers should therefore take a leading role in instructional activities, that is, the leading and supporting role in the output work. Setting up output tasks or selecting input materials is a difficult undertaking for teachers. As a result, the future research should focus on increasing studies on encouraging instructors to shift their roles.

#### 4.6 Prospect of POA

Firstly, Professor Wen Qiufang's series of publications on "Production-oriented Approach" has elaborated the theoretical structure of POA, which is getting increasingly excellent. The future research subjects could include empirical studies on cross-

cultural communication awareness and ability, evaluation systems, teaching resource creation, and the development of students' English application skills, etc. From a given degree of POA in the teaching practice of qualitative research application and embodiment, college students' English autonomous learning ability, application ability, and cross-cultural communication ability of comprehensive research are future needs to further investigate the topic. The POA should be improved through continued teaching practice, strengthened the empirical research, and the empirical research would be used to continue to validate the effectiveness of input facilitation and study the rationale of output task design.

Secondly, when conducting empirical research, we should consider using a variety of research approaches, such as case and action studies. Teachers can extend the practice period to test the POA theory's long-term effectiveness, completely comprehend the challenges of the POA in teaching practice, encourage the development of teaching practice, and promote the theory's continuous improvement during the teaching procedure.

Thirdly, future studies should focus on strengthening the POA evaluation system's research and improvement, improving teachers' understanding and mastery of the form of teacher-student cooperation evaluation, and combining evaluation with teaching so that teachers can effectively "teach" and lead students to "learn" in "evaluation" (Sun, 2020). Researchers can practice and examine the specific principles of various evaluation methods, or think about how to rationally coordinate a range of evaluation methods, so that the output-oriented method's evaluation system may actually encourage learning by evaluation and encourage successful learning (Sun, 2019).

Fourthly, the research combining POA with teacher development should be conducted. Teachers should be aware of the inconsistency between the application theory and their own development when implementing any new theory (Qiu Lin, 2020). Teachers should now meet greater standards, according to the POA. We should focus on balancing the role of instructors' scaffolding and students' autonomy in the future, as well as supporting their professional development (Zhang, 2020). The research should not just look at ways to encourage teachers to shift their roles and do so in a dynamic way but also at how to support teachers' professional growth and their vital position in the classroom.

## **5. Conclusion**

The production-oriented Approach is a significant theoretical method for foreign language education in China since it is rooted in Chinese educational background. Through a review of the literature and the data analysis, it is clear that the theoretical system of POA has been continuously tested, revised, and improved over many years of exploration and practice, but there are still some issues that require Chinese scholars and front-line teachers to make unrelenting efforts and exploration in order to better utilize POA in teaching practice.

As a novel teaching theory in China, POA has a scientific, philosophical underpinning, a deep theoretical background, and particular Chinese traits, all of which contribute to its rapid growth in China. In the last five years, Chinese educational researchers have combined systematic theoretical knowledge with practical experience, broadened the scope of theoretical application, continuously enriched and improved the theoretical content, and offered valuable suggestions and opinions for the practical application of POA to solve problems in Chinese foreign language education.

Despite the fact that POA's outstanding successes give people optimism for the future of college foreign language education, there are still many unsolved difficulties that require the collaboration of professionals and researchers from other countries, fields, and areas. It is expected that in the future, POA will not only thrive in China, but will also have the opportunity to test teaching links in other countries in terms of the unwavering efforts of experts and researchers from all over the world, with more good research results expected.

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