

# Cultivation of College English Listening and Speaking Abilities Based on Integrated English Course

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**Abstract**—With the development of the times, enhancing the students' integrated competence in English usage, especially the listening and speaking abilities, is an important goal of current college English teaching. Based on the first-grade integrated English course of Beijing International Studies University, this study explores the effective teaching methods and modes to cultivate the students' English listening and speaking abilities in integrated English course.

**Keywords**—*integrated English course; English listening and speaking abilities; classroom activity*

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of globalization, professionals with high English communication and application abilities are urgently needed in all walks of life in China. Therefore, it is an important goal of College English teaching to cultivate the students' integrated competence in English usage, especially the listening and speaking abilities. However, the current college English teaching in China is confronted with tough situation: the teaching time is limited and the teaching task is heavy. Especially in the integrated English course, it is difficult to provide students with the opportunity to fully engage in listening and speaking training because of the limitations such as class type, teaching content and teaching schedule. In fact, due to the relatively longer teaching time, the integrated English course plays an important role in the English curriculum system, exerting a great impact on the students' English proficiency. Therefore, it is extremely urgent to make necessary reforms and innovations in the traditional integrated English curriculum.

Based on the first-grade integrated English course of Beijing International Studies University, this study explores the effective teaching methods and modes to cultivate the students' English listening and speaking abilities in integrated English course.

## II. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This study plans to conduct an integrated English teaching experiment in the second semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. Based on communicative purpose, the experiment attempts to try different teaching methods, such as interactive teaching, cooperative teaching, task-based

approach, role-play teaching method, etc., hoping to find out the factors affecting the effective output of listening and speaking and explore the roles that different teaching methods play in the teaching of English listening and speaking.

The whole teaching experiment will center on the textbook of the integrated English course. Based on the content of the texts, appropriate activities concerning listening and speaking will be designed.

## III. RESEARCH METHOD

Through classroom observation, this study closely observes the implementation effects of different teaching methods in the classroom. At the same time, this study also takes reflection journal and regular interview as supplementary methods, hoping to fully explore the factors affecting the students' English listening and speaking abilities from different perspectives, and put forward corresponding suggestions and countermeasures.

## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Through four-month teaching experiment and innovation, the students' participation in integrated English course has been greatly improved and their listening and speaking abilities have also been further enhanced. The effective classroom teaching methods and modes conducive to the improvement of the students' English listening and speaking abilities from different levels are summarized as follows:

### A. The Design of the Classroom Activity

At present, the textbooks of integrated English often focus on vocabulary, grammar, language points and the understanding of the text rather than listening and speaking abilities. Besides, due to the limitation of the content of the textbooks, the limited listening and speaking activities in the textbooks tend to be stereotyped, which is not helpful to stimulate the students' interest. Therefore, it is quite necessary for teachers to redesign the classroom teaching based on the textbook and incorporate a wide variety of listening and speaking activities. The following are some effective activities concerning listening and speaking that can be conducted in integrated English course.

1) *Class report*: Class report is commonly used in English teaching, but this activity tends to be a formalistic burden and quite time-consuming. In order to complete the task, the students simply recite the prepared manuscript or play the PowerPoint. There are three main reasons for the phenomenon described above: firstly, teachers do not give clear requirements and reasonable guidance; secondly, students lack interest in the topics of class reports; thirdly, most students, especially the freshmen, lack basic speaking skills, including how to choose a topic, how to organize a report, how to use body language properly, how to eliminate the tension during a speech, etc.

In response to the problem mentioned above, teachers should first clarify the significance of class reports. It is essential for teachers to make it clear to students that they can only refer to their notes rather than just read out the written speech and the PowerPoint used in the report must be concise. In order to mobilize the enthusiasm of the whole class, in the process of listening to the report, all the remaining students should be required to develop the habit of taking notes, preparing for the interactive activities such as questioning, discussion, retelling and comment. In addition, the theme of the class report should not be limited to the content of the textbook. Teachers should also encourage students to choose topics that they are familiar with or interested in so that students can express themselves better. Meanwhile, teachers should introduce some basic speaking skills and supplement some teaching materials such as speech videos related to the teaching content. Through the analysis of those speech videos, students can have a better understanding of the speaking knowledge and skills, which is helpful for them to give a successful report.

2) *Thematic speech*: Thematic speeches can train one's language organizing competence and logical thinking, but they have higher requirements for individual's language proficiency and scope of knowledge. At the same time, because most of the junior students lack basic speaking skills, thematic speeches often become formalistic and ineffective.

Therefore, as mentioned above, teachers should first introduce the basic speaking skills. After that, teachers can choose a proper text fully discussed and already learned to carry out this activity. Take Unit 8 Focus on Global Warming in *An Integrated English Course* (Book 2) for example. This unit is arranged in the second half of the semester. At that time, students have already had a good command of some basic speaking skills through the training of class reports in the first half of the semester. Besides, the theme of Unit 8 is closely related to everyone's life, which is easy to arouse the students' interest. Therefore, Unit 8 is a proper unit to carry out thematic speech. Of course, it is not easy for them to give a thematic speech individually. Therefore, they can be required to do it by groups for the first time. Working with their group members, based on the textbook knowledge and via internet, they can better access and integrate relevant information on global warming from various perspectives, such as the causes, current situation, hazards and solutions of global warming. It turns out quite successful and students are highly motivated. Undoubtedly,

thematic speech can not only train students' language organizing competence in an all-round way, but also cultivate their logical thinking ability.

3) *Phonetic training*: Systematic Phonetic training is very important for junior students. Teachers should explain to students the basic rules of English phonetics as early as possible, such as liaison, reduction, plosive, rising and falling tones, cluster simplification, stress, and the differences between British and American pronunciation. Through systematic phonetic training, the students' pronunciation will be constantly improved, which will not only help the students improve their listening ability, but also greatly enhance their willingness to communicate in English, thus further enhance their confidence and motivation in English learning. Generally speaking, text recordings with high quality are often attached to integrated English textbooks. These recordings are pure in pronunciation, moderate in speech rate and clear in sound quality, thus quite suitable for junior students to practice phonetics. Therefore, students should be encouraged to read after the text recordings or retell based on what they have just heard from the recordings. During the process, they should also pay attention to correct their pronunciation. In addition, dubbing is an activity that junior students are willing to participate in. It can effectively mobilize the students' enthusiasm and interest. Teachers can select video clips related to the theme of the text to design corresponding dubbing activities and guide the students to participate in the activities. Through this fun activity, the students' willingness and confidence to express themselves in English will absolutely be further enhanced.

4) *Discussion and debate*: Discussion and debate are small-scale cooperative classroom activities. Compared with class report and other activities that need to show individual English proficiency in front of the whole class, such cooperative activities as discussion and debate can not only help to alleviate or eliminate the students' tension and anxiety in the process of listening and speaking exercises, but also stimulate their initiative and enthusiasm to participate in the activities. Generally speaking, there is a fixed theme in every unit of integrated English textbook, which is suitable for classroom discussion and debate activities. Of course, teachers still need to combine the content of the textbooks to design a variety of discussion and debate activities from the shallower to the deeper.

5) *Role play*: Role play is a kind of classroom activity which has enjoyed great popularity among junior students. However, it's not an easy task for teachers to organize this activity well in order to achieve the desired effect. First of all, not every text in the textbook is suitable for this activity. Therefore, it's necessary for teachers to make proper adjustments or supplement relevant materials. Meanwhile, in order to avoid the sameness of the role play, teachers also need to encourage the students to make a different design of the plot and perform differently based on the same text.

Besides, in order to avoid being formalistic, teachers need to guide the whole process appropriately.

6) *Situational dialogue*: Situational dialogue can simulate the real situation and create a realistic language environment. It is an effective way for language learners to improve their language application ability. However, due to the limitation of the course type, this activity is seldom used in integrated English course. In fact, in the textbook of the integrated English, there are also some chapters suitable for this activity. For example, in the second volume of An Integrated English Course, there is an article entitled "We've Been Hit!" which relates a story that happens on the plane during an emergency. The article contains a lot of dialogues between different characters. Students can use these dialogues as reference to simulate different emergency situations on the plane and conduct situational dialogues in groups. Due to the freshness of the topic and the use of the text as reference, the students showed great enthusiasm and activeness, which not only further deepened the understanding of the text, but also effectively carried out the output of listening and speaking.

7) *Retelling and story adaptation*: The textbook of the integrated English currently used in Beijing International Studies University is full of narrative articles which are suitable for students to retell or adapt. Retelling seems simple. However, due to the lack of skills and abilities of language induction and transformation, students usually repeat or recite what the book says, which makes the activity boring and difficult to achieve the desired effect. Therefore, teachers should first take one article as example, help students to summarize the outline and main points of the story, and then encourage students to retell the story in their own words. Story adaptation can give full play to the students' imagination. It's full of fun and enjoys great popularity among students. Of course, it's still very important for teachers to put forward clear requirements and give reasonable guidance in order to guarantee the success of this activity.

### B. Teaching Method

Through the classroom teaching practice in the whole semester, the author finds that the innovation of teaching methods is of great significance for the improvement of students' listening and speaking abilities. If teachers blindly follow the traditional teaching mode and just focus on the explanation of words, grammatical items and the understanding of the text, the whole classroom teaching will inevitably move towards a fixed pattern. Over time, the classroom teaching will become lifeless and the students' enthusiasm and initiative to learn will also be greatly undermined. In order to change the situation mentioned above, the teaching experiment tries different teaching methods, such as interactive teaching, cooperative teaching, task-based approach, role-play teaching method, etc. The multiple teaching methods mentioned above set up a colorful platform for the students to cooperate and exchange, which not only helps to cultivate the students' awareness of

collaboration, but also helps to further improve their listening and speaking abilities.

### C. Teaching Aids

A large number of studies have shown that, in foreign language teaching, if teachers can reasonably use multimedia to create a realistic context for learners, it will be conducive to mobilizing their various sensory faculties such as vision and hearing, thereby ensuring more language input. At the same time, repeated stimulation of learners' multiple senses also helps to mobilize their subjective initiative and arouse their desire to express themselves in language. In the classroom teaching practice of this semester, multimedia is widely used, including the continuous updating of teaching courseware, the supplement of the latest audio-visual materials, and the application of new teaching software and so on. The multimedia helps to create a realistic context with pictures, texts, sounds and images, which can definitely arouse the students' interest in English listening and speaking.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study has attained quite a few beneficial revelations from the four-month classroom teaching experiment which proves the necessity and feasibility of carrying out listening and speaking training in integrated English course. Firstly, in order to provide suitable and varied listening and speaking materials and activities for the students, teachers should redesign the classroom teaching based on the textbook. Meanwhile, the successful implementation of different teaching activities requires teachers to play different roles. Teachers are required to be flexible and highly involved, which is quite challenging for them. In addition, the application of diverse teaching methods and teaching aids can definitely help to improve the students' learning enthusiasm, initiative and classroom participation. Through this classroom teaching experiment and exploration, the author of this paper hopes to provide some reference for English listening and speaking teaching in integrated English course, and eventually help to enhance the students' integrated competence in English usage.

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