

# Exploration and Practice of Listening Teaching for English Majors

Weiwei He

Changqing College of Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics  
 Lanzhou, China

**Abstract**—English listening is an important basic course for business English majors, but it is difficult to teach. Through questionnaire surveys and individual interviews with students, this article understands students' questions and demands, mainly discusses methods and skills in listening teaching, and summarizes the concepts and skills involved in listening teaching.

**Keywords:** listening teaching, strategies, skills

## I. INTRODUCTION





English listening learning plays an important role in Chinese students' English learning. As an important source of input, students receive relevant information through listening, imitating, understanding and processing knowledge. Listening is an important source of receiving knowledge and a test for students. Wang Yan (2018) once said: Listening ability is the premise and basis of foreign language communication. It not only determines the degree of smoothness of foreign language communication to a certain extent, but also plays a vital role in the overall development of language ability of foreign language learners. Cai Jigang (2011) also believes that college students in China have a strong desire to improve their listening and speaking skills. A survey of 6625 college students in 2009 showed that the most English skills students want to improve after entering university are listening and speaking, accounting for 70.2% and 86.2% respectively; and the proportion of students who want to improve reading and writing is respectively 41.2% and 40.2%.

The training goals of the business English major of Changqing College of Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics indicate that students should be more proficient in using daily English and business English knowledge, and after graduation, they can engage in related work such as economics and trade, management and finance, and international business. However, in actual teaching, it is found that students' English listening and speaking ability is very limited, especially their English listening comprehension ability is poor. There is a gap between this reality and the training goals the college set, not to mention having strong English communication skills and participating in fierce international competition. Therefore, systematic and specialized listening training for students majoring in business English in the college is necessary and urgent.

## II. QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

The author is currently teaching English listening for undergraduates majoring in business English at Changqing College of Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics. There are 48 undergraduates in 2018, all of whom are female. For students of this major, listening ability training is a difficult course. In order to have a basic grasp of the students' listening ability, the author specially designed a questionnaire to survey the whole class of students, distributed 48 questionnaires, and recovered 48 valid questionnaires. Students' college entrance examination results are shown in "Table I".

TABLE I. STUDENTS' COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION RESULTS

Grade	Number of people	Proportion
less than 90	11	 22.92%
100-109	25	 52.08%
110-119	6	 12.5%
More than 120	6	 12.5%

According to the questionnaire, more than half of the 48 students graduated from senior high schools in county towns, among which 3 students graduated from senior high schools in townships. Compared with the developed areas along the eastern coast, the level of education and teaching in the western region is relatively backward. At the same time, due to the inter-provincial and intra-provincial mobility of the population in the western region, the supply of educational resources in the western region is uneven and inadequate (Luo Junbing, 2017), and good educational resources are mainly concentrated in provincial capital cities. Therefore, this explains another reason why students' academic performance is low. Compared with other college students who have 120 points or more to enter the English major, the gap between students in the author's department is still large. Before entering the university, these students had not undergone systematic specialized listening training, their listening comprehension skills are poor, and

incomprehension is the normal state of students. The questionnaire showed that 29 people thought that their listening level was average, accounting for 60.42%; 17 people thought that their listening level was relatively poor, accounting for 35.42%; 2 people thought that their listening level was poor, accounting for 4.16%. No one in the class was satisfied with their listening ability. In a separate interview, all students showed an urgent desire to improve their listening ability. However, the number and duration of these students' autonomous listening training are usually very limited. The number and duration of students' autonomous listening learning each week are shown in "Fig. 1" and "Fig. 2":

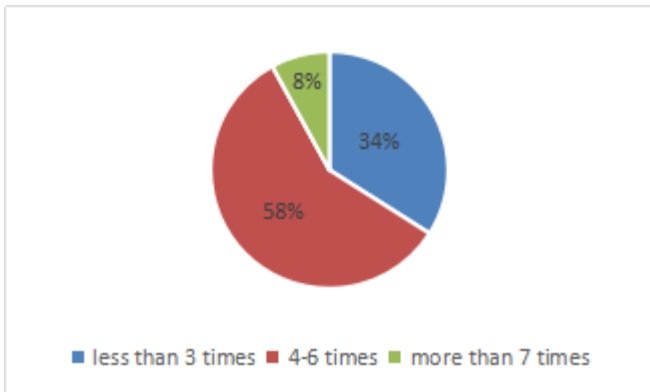


Fig. 1. The number of students' autonomous listening learning each week.

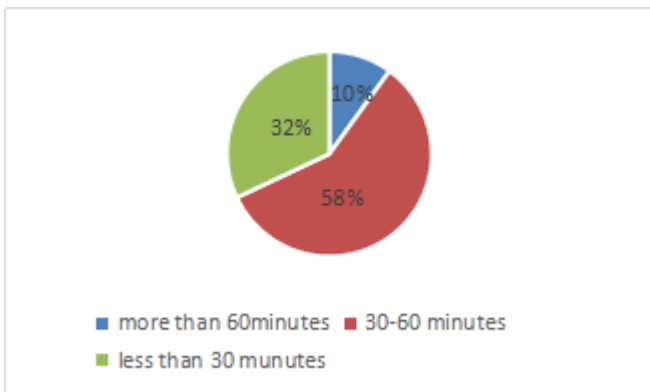


Fig. 2. The duration of students' autonomous listening learning each week.

In individual interviews with some students in the class, the author also learned that all students are not confident about their listening ability; the methods used by the teacher in the classroom can't be effectively applied to their own listening training, and the learning and usage are two pieces of skin; their own pronunciation is wrong, and the pronunciation is inconsistent with what they have heard, resulting in that they do not understand the content of the listening material; the amount of words is seriously insufficient. One of the important reasons for incomprehension is failing to understand the meaning of words, but the increase in word volume can't be solved overnight, so at present, listening ability is still limited. The situation of individual interviews is very common, and the

data from the questionnaire survey of students also confirms the content of individual interviews.

### III. EXPLORATION AND THINKING OF LISTENING CLASSROOM TEACHING

In order to solve the difficulties of students' listening comprehension, the author has made some thoughts and designs on the teaching of listening courses. In the course of teaching, the selected textbooks are 1-4 volumes of "Listening Course" (third edition) published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

#### A. Laying a good foundation in pronunciation and mastering the basic methods of taking notes

Semester 1: Students have just entered college, and at this stage they remain fresh and curious about each course. Listening training is a long-term and systematic project. In the first semester, it is most important to develop students' listening habits. At the junior and senior high school levels, students' listening comprehension training is limited to simple dialogues and chapters, which involve simple text content. However, after college, listening has become a specialized course and has an inseparable relationship with other courses.

In the first semester of teaching, correction of students' pronunciation is particularly important. Zhu Zhongyan (2000) believes that speech is the material shell of language. Without it, teaching can't be performed and communication will encounter difficulties. Only when the pronunciation is correct and the tone is appropriate can one understand the words of others, and the other can understand them. The students taught by the author have obvious problems in pronunciation. Some students have inaccurate pronunciation with local accents, and some students can't even recognize the International Phonetic Alphabet. Through the communication with the phonetic teacher, the problems found were consistent. In addition to the systematic and specialized learning of the students in the phonetics class, the author also corrected and strengthened some confusing pronunciations and error-prone pronunciations in the listening class to ensure that the students' pronunciations were consistent with standard British or American English. The teaching in the textbook focuses on the listening and discrimination of weak reading, continuous reading and words with similar pronunciation; at the same time, students are required to distinguish the accent of words, the intonation of sentences and the accent of English speakers in different countries. In this part of the teaching process, in addition to requiring students to understand and know the right answer, it also supervises students to imitate. This method allows students to open their mouths and deepen their memory.

The author also introduced the most basic note-taking marking system to students. For example, common country and international organization names: China (CHN), India (IND), the United States of America (USA/US), the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO); abbreviations: week (WK), information (Inf), instead of (I/O);

special symbols: because (∴), so (∴), rise (↑), before yesterday (.ystd). Through the training of basic skills, the purpose is to strengthen the students' foundation and provide strong support for later learning.

### *B. Strengthening grammar skills and focusing on taking notes*

In addition to the methods used in the previous semester, the teaching of the second semester is more focused on students' grasp of the structure of sentences and the discrimination of different types of sentences. Part of the textbook in the second volume focuses on training students to analyze and judge simple sentences, juxtaposed sentences, compound sentences and juxtaposed compound sentences. On the one hand, this is a test of students' grammatical ability. It is also an exercise of students' ability to refine the focus and trunk of sentences, and train students to abandon unimportant modifiers and hit the key points of sentences. But English grammar of students in the author's department is generally poor, and the sentences printed on the books are not all accurately classified. Some sentences even appear in the form of listening, and students have only one chance to listen. In order to make students not afraid of this part, in the course of the lecture, the author first introduced several common sentence patterns in English, and analyzed the differences and connections between different sentence types. In the course of the later lectures, students are asked questions from time to time to understand whether they have grasped different sentence patterns. In the process of judging sentence patterns, if they encounter concentrated problems, teachers need to explain to the students clearly, draw inferences about other cases from one instance and let one student give an example for himself, and other students will analyze it. Through sentence judgment training, students can quickly grasp the meaning of the sentence in the process of listening, understand the content of the sentence, and then have a certain understanding of the listening materials.

In the second volume of the textbook, there is also a part of the content specifically training students' ability to take notes. This part of the content not only requires students to understand the content of the article, but also to accurately grasp the structure and focus of the article. But through classroom observation and questioning, the completion of this part of the students is poor. The main problems include: the content of the article is not understood, the structure of the article is unclear and the corresponding notes can't be recorded. For example, in a piece of listening material about sleep, the vast majority of students did not clearly distinguish the different modes of sleep in the material, the description and recording of the characteristics of sleep status at different levels are messy, and the symbol system of their notes is not reasonable. Useful information to fill in blanks or answer questions is extremely limited. This aspect shows that students are not good at discovering and grasping the core content and keywords of the article in the process of taking notes; it also reflects the fact that students can't take notes themselves. In order to solve these problems, the author first needs students to clearly understand what the article is about,

and the students can't answer accurately and comprehensively in the first pass. However, during the first pass of listening comprehension, students can more accurately describe the key words, repeated words, and phrases in the material. This information is very important for their subsequent listening comprehension; in the second listening process, students need to be clear about how the full text progresses. What they need most is to record signal words and transition words, to ensure sensitivity to these words, and to have a clearer structure of the article. During the third pass of listening comprehension, the information heard will be further refined and classified, and the information that is not recorded in the previous two passes will be supplemented, and the main idea will be better grasped on this basis.

### *C. Focusing on chapter listening and paying attention to methods*

The third semester: in the third semester of teaching, students generally report that listening materials are difficult to understand. Therefore, the author slowed down the teaching speed and further adjusted the teaching mode. One of the highlights of the third semester is listening exercises in discourse and dialogue. These two parts of training are the top priority of classroom training, because the scores of these two parts are very high, each taking 10 points. In normal contact, the author first asks students to conduct a preview before class, to search for and recite key words and phrases appearing in listening materials, and to understand the background knowledge involved in the materials. The purpose of this is to help students prepare in advance. In the class, students are asked to read options or questions before listening training, guess the relevant fields that the material may involve, and mobilize the students' related knowledge that they have learned before. This will eliminate another obstacle in the listening process. In the process of listening training, the author will not disturb or give any hints to the students, and the students take notes while listening. After listening to the first pass, the teacher will pause for a period of time to let the students review the notes and arrange the answers. At the same time, the teacher will randomly check the students' notes and find common problems or urgently needed corrections in the notes. During the second listening process, the author will let students retell the key parts, and will ask questions about the problems in the textbook, feedback the problems in the student's notes, and propose a modified plan, so that students can add relevant information and teachers can discuss with the students during the listening process. On the one hand, it helps to strengthen students' understanding of listening materials, and it also helps students to output a certain amount of spoken language.

In order to urge students to overcome laziness, the author established a homework clocking in group. All students in the class joined the group and teachers arranged daily homework in the group. The students were required to take photos of their daily homework and clock in, effectively preventing the phenomenon of checking assignments in the second week and students making up homework and plagiarizing each other the night before. The homework in

the textbook is part of the homework. In order to meet the needs of professional development, the author requires students to have access to the latest English news reports, including: CIR, VOA, BBC, CGTN and other radio and television stations. Students are recommended to download the relevant English listening APP.

#### *D. Improving dictation skills and focusing on overall development*

The fourth semester focuses on the dictation part. Peng Mei (2012) summarized the process of dictation. She believes that dictation involves all aspects of speech, grammar, and vocabulary. It is an investigation of the listener's comprehensive ability in listening, writing, memorizing, understanding, and analyzing. The problem that students commonly reflected in the process of dictation was that they had less content to write down, they were unable to listen to it after writing, and the content they remember was incomplete. In fact, this state has something to do with people's memory. The things people remember best are the first things they hear, or the last things they receive. During the dictation process, students exposed a large number of problems: insufficient vocabulary, spelling errors, grammatical errors, and logical incompatibility. In the process of tutoring students' dictation, the author tried to select materials related to students' daily life as much as possible to reduce the difficulty, so that the difficulty of the dictation materials can be progressively advanced. The process of dictation is played strictly in accordance with the TEM-4 dictation test. After the dictation is over, it is recommended that students check and modify. The most important thing is for students to review each other, understand the problems of others, and reflect on their mistakes. Due to time constraints in class, students are required to practice further after class and upload photos of dictation to WeChat group for review. Teachers should focus on common issues in subsequent classes.

At the same time, in the teaching process, the requirements for students are further strengthened. Listening-reciting, listening-translating, listening-answering, listening-speaking, listening-recording and other exercises are alternately interspersed. Students must be fully involved in the classroom, mobilizing all senses for listening training.

At the beginning of the fourth semester, students have to take TEM-4. This is a huge test for them. In view of the actual situation of the students, the author continues to encourage students in the WeChat group to share the experience and skills of students from other schools to take the final four exams to help students build self-confidence. According to the research results of Yu Qinmei (2013) and others, combining advanced multimedia network platforms with traditional reading, recitation, retelling, note-taking, and practice tests, and incorporating language input and output into systems and loops can increase students' sensitivity to language forms and accelerate language internalization. The purpose of this is to help students review and master all the listening skills they have learned, and promote the continuous improvement of their listening skills.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Yang Qian (2002) said that in order to make the classroom efficient, the teacher should listen to the materials involved repeatedly during the course preparation, fully understand its phonetic characteristics, grammatical difficulties, chapter composition, and main idea and understand the problems that students may encounter; at the same time, teachers must further stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and let them abandon the inherent concept of poor English listening, strengthen the process assessment, use the assessment of ordinary performance as a means of supervising training and integrate training outside the classroom with training inside the classroom. The improvement of listening ability can't be achieved overnight, which requires the joint efforts of teachers and students. It is expected that in the future teaching and learning, teachers and students can cooperate better to further improve students' listening ability and inter-cultural communication.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Cai Jigang. A Study on the Goal Setting of College English Teaching in China — A Second Discussion on the Relationship Between Listening, Speaking, and Reading and Writing [J]. *Foreign Languages*, 2011, (1): 21-29 (in Chinese)
- [2] Luo Junbing. The Allocation of Compulsory Education Resources in Western China Against the Background of Population Migration [J]. *Foreign Languages*, 2012, (5): 79-87 (in Chinese)
- [3] Peng Mei. A Study of Actions in English Dictation Teaching — A Case Study of Part-time English Majors [J]. *Foreign Languages*, 2012, (5): 79-87 (in Chinese)
- [4] Wang Yan. Constructing a New Model of Foreign Language Listening Teaching with the Aim of Language Ability, Speculative Ability and Intercultural Ability [J]. *Foreign Language Teaching*, 2018 (11): 69-73 (in Chinese)
- [5] Yang Qian. Exploration and Practice of College English Listening Teaching [J]. *Foreign Language World*, 2002, (2): 58-60 (in Chinese)
- [6] Yu Qinmei, Lu Ji, Wang Yi, Wang Weiqian. An Empirical Study on the Effectiveness of Listening Teaching in the Research-based Teaching Mode of Audiovisual Listening [J]. *Foreign Language E-learning Teaching*, 2013, (11): 44-49 (in Chinese)
- [7] Zhu Zhongyan. A Preliminary Study of College English Listening Teaching Models and Methods [J]. *Contemporary Educational Theory and Practice*, 2017 (3): 6-8 (in Chinese)