



# Research on Effects of Writing English Diary on Speaking Skills of Students Majoring in English

Zhiqiong Huang and Liaoyan Fu<sup>(✉)</sup>

Changsha Medical University, Changsha, Hunan, China  
fuliaoyan@hnu.edu.cn

**Abstract.** Through questionnaire survey, this thesis tries to ascertain the current situation that the speaking skills of English-major students are less than satisfactory and to analyse the reasons. It proposes a solution of keeping writing English diaries, through which students can learn a large number of useful words and phrases and use them in more oral English topics so that their English speaking skills are improved.

**Keywords:** Writing English diaries · English speaking skills · Vocabulary acquisition

## 1 Introduction

With its rapid development of politics and economy, China is having increasingly closer international exchanges. English as a common international language plays an important role in effective communication between countries. Through questionnaire survey, we find that college English-major students are generally not good at speaking English. This thesis is aimed to summarize and analyse problems English-major students encounter in oral English practice and study. It brings forward feasible measures to help students improve their English speaking skills.

## 2 Current Situation of Speaking Skills of English-Major Students

This questionnaire survey is conducted on the Internet, combining online questionnaire with offline questionnaire. For questionnaire data collection, a total of 150 questionnaires are distributed, out of which 135 are effectively received, with effective recovery of 90%. It meets the requirement of the survey. The questionnaire is divided into two parts, including evaluation of English speaking skills and thoughts on how to improve English speaking skills.

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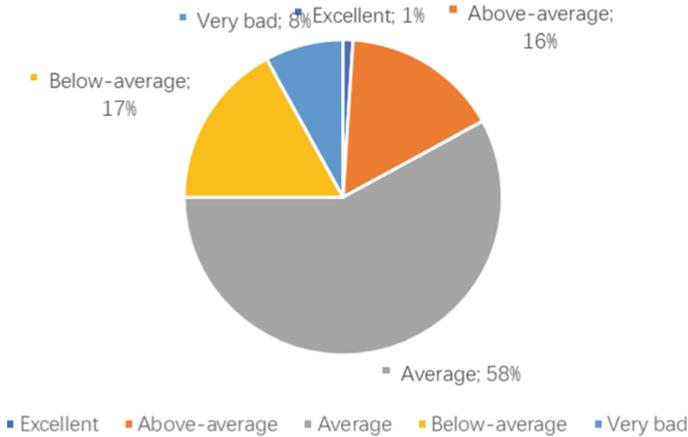
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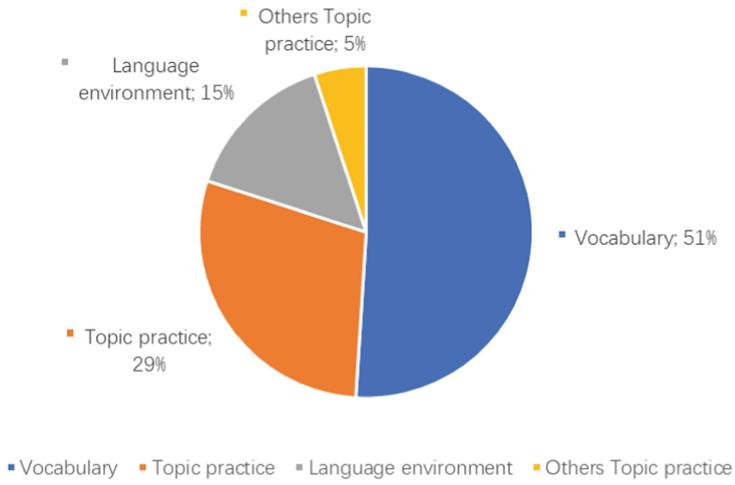
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From the survey results, only 1% of the students think they have excellent English speaking skills. 58% of the surveyed students are at the average level of English speaking, only being able to speak English in daily communication and unable to deal with complicated conversations. And 8% of the students are very bad at speaking English. And the remaining 33% of the students are above or below the average level of English speaking. Among those average students, over 51% of them think English speaking skill is affected by vocabulary, 29% think it's effected by topic practice, 15% think it's effected by language environment, and the remaining 5% think it's effected by other factors such as psychological stress (Figs. 1 and 2).



**Fig. 1.** Research on Effects of Writing English Diary on Speaking Skills of English-Major Students.



**Fig. 2.** Several Ways to improve English-speaking skills.

It can be seen that college English-major students have varied English speaking skills. According to some excellent English-major students, though they have passed the TEM4, they still can't meet the requirements for real-life English speaking of employers, incompetent to do related work. Affected by the environment, they can't obtain enough English knowledge and skills. As a result, they don't want to and can't speak English effectively [1]. While studying English-professional courses, even English speaking courses, they are too shy to speak out and rarely try to start an English conversation with foreign teachers. It sharply reduces their chances of oral practice and communication. Therefore, dumb English comes into being, which is a considerable shortcoming for English-major students.

### **3 Analysis on Causes for Unsatisfactory Speaking Skills of English-Major Students**

Effectively learning English speaking skills in real time refers to a kind of language activity in which you use rather advanced language with complicated forms to manage the processes of communication and language cognition including conceptualization, formulation and articulation [2]. When forming speech structures, the speaker should have the ability of choosing proper vocabulary and language, extracting relevant knowledge from his mind, expressing his own thoughts and ideas, and building logical grammar system and pronunciation structure based on the language and vocabulary.

In the process of oral vocabulary acquisition, especially in the period of speech formation, we have strong needs for accumulating oral vocabulary. In oral output, we need to integrate and process the vocabulary in our mind. Insufficient vocabulary makes students unable to express their views completely and accurately [3]. They would be increasingly reluctant to speak out as they find it more and more difficult to speak English, ending into a vicious circle. It can be seen that the vocabulary knowledge is the theoretical basis for rapidly extracting and remembering words, which also plays an important role in the daily teaching of English speaking and listening output. In addition, the accumulation of resources and materials influences English speaking. For the quality of oral English output, higher standards for output will cause lower fluency and accuracy. And in language output, learners tend to give priority to language form over content, which cause a big problem for extracting integrating and outputting knowledge in your mind.

### **4 Strategy of Improving Speaking Skills of English-Major Students**

The Input Hypothesis put forward by Krashen argues that you have to learn human language based on its first nature. It also holds that the only and the easiest way for human to acquire a language is to have a basic understanding of language input [4]. The so-called Comprehensible Input theory means that you have to understand language materials slightly more advanced than your current language skills. So according to his hypothesis, language learners can speak the language as long as they can understand the input information [5]. We can see that the ability to input language information plays an important role in language acquisition.

We choose writing diaries as a method of improving English speaking skills. The reason is that diaries can record what a student has seen and done in a day. English-major students are learning new English vocabulary and phrases everyday, so it's a feasible approach for them to write English diaries every day. It's also the best way to remember these words and phrases by using them in active writing instead of trying to find opportunities to write or passively doing perfunctory writing exercises. Taking this as an opportunity, students can acquire a steady stream of materials for English speaking, such as vocabulary and different resources of political, economic, and cultural knowledge. The content and the form of the diaries are not important. It's the act of using English that matters. Through this, we can practice English by writing and improve our English speaking skills.

We input language skills by keeping writing English diaries. The experimental group and the control group were set up to perform the comparative experiments. Through experiments, we analyse changes in the students' English speaking skills. We also make an overall summary of the changes of the two groups.

This experiments selected 50 English-major sophomore students in Changsha Medical University as experiments samples. These 50 students were divided into two groups of 25. Comparative experiments were conducted, results told from students' average scores. When they took part in the research, they had finished one-year study of professional knowledge. And their grades are basically in line with their English speaking skills. Under the instruction of the project leader, students of the experimental group kept writing English diaries for one semester, while under the same education condition, students of the control group didn't write diaries. We collected their English speaking test scores one semester before the experiments. Then we collected and processed the data of their English speaking test results after the one-year experiments. We made an objective comparison of two categories of data to ascertain their changes in English speaking skills.

In order to make the experimental data more valuable, we collected both the oral test and interpretation test results of the experimental group and the control group. And we specified the content of the tests. As shown in the "Table 1", the data in red indicates the improvement of their performance.

From the data we can see, the experimental group has significantly bigger improvement of test results in every topic and every category. So we can come to the conclusion that keeping writing English diaries can improve speaking skills of English-major students. Besides, according to online questionnaire survey, we can see English-major students don't want to speak out and their speaking skills can't get improved because of many reasons such as language foundation, language environment, psychological stress, etc. Through experiments, students who keep writing English diaries think their ability of remembering and using vocabulary has been significantly improved. Therefore, for English-major students, proper amount of output is a feasible way to promote not only effective input, but also deeper output.

**Table 1.** Performance before and after the experiment

Group	Topic Category	English Interpretation (First Semester)	English Interpretation (Second Semester)	English Speaking (First Semester)	English Speaking (Second Semester)
experimental Group	Politics	72	88	70	84
	Economy	90	95	81	85
	Culture	83	88	77	81
	Military	93	93	86	84
	General	86	90	71	78
Control Group	Politics	84	83	61	61
	Economy	89	88	73	72
	Culture	88	88	63	61
	Military	87	87	68	63
	General	86	83	70	69

## 5 Conclusion

Keeping writing English diaries can help English-major students accumulate vocabulary, phrases, and a large amount of English knowledge from politics, economy, culture, military and other aspects. Therefore, students can input lots of language knowledge and skills. It promotes sustainable effective output practice, which in return can promote continuous input of various English knowledge and skills. So it has an effect of virtuous circle, and it helps students learn and use English based on thorough understanding and acquisition. Of course, writing dairies requires commitment, overall planning and steady progress. We shouldn't stop after getting a little knowledge and expect to make huge progress overnight [6].

**Authors' Contributions.** Zhiqiong Huang is responsible for experimental design, data analysis and the manuscript; Liaoyan Fu contributed to revising and editing.

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