



A Study of College Oral English Teaching Based on Immersion Teaching, Input and Output Theories

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Abstract. Due to the constraints of teachers, class hours, class types and other factors, oral English teaching in college has always been faced with difficulties, which cannot provide students with enough time to practice oral English, and students have too few opportunities to contact and use oral English. This paper tries to find a solution to the problem from the immersion teaching, language input and output theories, and discusses the strategies and methods teachers can use in practical teaching process so as to create a good English learning environment for students, provide students with rich and suitable oral English input materials, and let students have more opportunities to practice their oral English.

Keywords: oral English teaching; immersion teaching; input theory; output theory

1 Introduction of related theories

1.1 Immersion teaching

The immersion teaching method originated from the French teaching in Canada in the 1960s, where teachers not only taught French in French, but also taught other courses in French to maximize the "immersion" of students in the French environment. In the teaching activities, French has become the language of instruction, not only the content to be learned, but also the learning tool to learn other subjects. The language used to teach and the content needed to be learned were combined. This teaching method of teaching subject knowledge in a second language "immerses" students in a second language environment for all or more than half of the time at school, and students have more opportunities to contact and use language skills. Immersion teaching has achieved great success in Canada and has been rapidly spread and developed in the world.

1.2 Language input theory

Krashen, an American linguist, put forward the input theory of language in 1982. "He believes that language learners will naturally acquire a second language as long as they are exposed to a large number of understandable language inputs slightly higher than

the learners' current level with the help of the language environment in the case of minor psychological barriers. The best language input should have the following four characteristics: comprehensibility, interest/relevance, non-grammatical program arrangement, adequate input, of which comprehensibility is particularly important." [1] The language difficulty of input materials should be able to be understood by learners, but slightly higher than learners' current language ability. Only such input can be more easily absorbed by learners, and at the same time effectively accelerate their language acquisition. If the kind of input is already known by the learner, the learner can only practice the knowledge already mastered, and cannot further improve his language ability. If the input is too difficult, beyond the scope of learners' understanding, it will not attract learners' interest and attention, which is not conducive to learners' language acquisition and may cause learners to have emotional filtering and communication barriers.

1.3 Language output theory

Swain, a Canadian linguist, proposed the output theory of language in 1985. He believes that understandable inputs alone cannot make second language learners use language accurately and fluently. Successful second language learners need to not only contact a large number of understandable inputs but also produce understandable outputs. Learners must have the opportunity to use the language they are learning in order to learn effectively. In the process of language output, learners will find problems existing in the language system, and thus trigger the process of consolidating existing language knowledge and acquiring new language knowledge. Through continuous self-examination and correction of the target language, learners can enhance the accuracy of language acquisition, thus, input is truly absorbed and internalized by learners. "Swain has studied output carefully and concluded that output has at least four functions for language learning: increasing fluency in expression, increasing the learner's sensitivity to language points, helping learners to test their assumptions about language, and helping learners to reflect on, control, and internalize language." [2]

2 Current situation and problems

As an important part of China's higher education, college English is a compulsory course for most non-English major students in the undergraduate education stage. Colleges and universities at all levels in China offer college English courses for non-English major students. As a basic part of college English courses, college oral English is a compulsory course for non-English majors in various colleges and universities, either as a single course or as part of the comprehensive teaching of college English courses. The *2020 College English Teaching Guide* of the Ministry of Education points out that "the goal of college English teaching is to cultivate students' English application ability, enhance their cross-cultural communication awareness and communication ability, develop their independent learning ability, improve their comprehensive cultural literacy, and cultivate their humanistic spirit and critical thinking ability, so that students can use English properly and effectively in study, life and future work, and meet the needs

of national, social, school and personal development." At the same time, *College English Teaching Guide* gives the following suggestions on the curriculum of college English: "General English courses related to basic and improvement goals should be compulsory courses, with 4 class hours per week", "In order to effectively cultivate students' language output ability, universities should control the class size of speaking and writing courses, and in principle, each class should not exceed 35 students"^[3]. However, due to the number of students, teaching teachers, teaching places and other factors, most of the college oral English courses offered by colleges and universities adopt large class teaching, the class size is far more than 35 students. In this teaching situation, it is difficult to substantially improve the weak English listening and speaking ability of Chinese college students and meet the practical needs of the country and society for graduates' English listening and speaking ability by relying only on extremely limited classroom teaching. According to a questionnaire survey conducted by Chen Xiaoman and Li Jiong (2004) on the oral English practice of non-English majors in a university, although most of the students (81.1%) recognize the importance of oral English, 92.9% of them want to improve their oral English ability, and 54.6% of them are eager to improve their oral English ability, only a very small number of students (5.7%) can be competent for daily English communication tasks, the majority of students (65.3%) only can speak slightly (limited to self-introduction, etc.), and 29% cannot speak at all. Most of the students (69.1%) think that there is a lack of opportunities to speak in class, only 12.6% of the students can consciously practice oral English after class, 87.4% of the students rarely practice after class, of which 29.86% of the students never practice after class.^[4] The problems reflected in the questionnaire survey are consistent with the current situation of college oral English teaching: On the one hand, students are eager to improve their oral English communication ability through the study of college oral English. On the other hand, the extremely limited class hours and large class teaching cannot provide sufficient opportunities for most students to learn and practice oral English in class, and it is rare for students to learn and practice oral English autonomously after class. The oral English expression ability of Chinese college students is generally weak, and the oral English teaching in Chinese colleges and universities is generally faced with difficulties. In terms of the concrete teaching practice, there are generally the following problems in college oral English teaching: (1) The English learning atmosphere is not thick, there is no good English learning environment, and students have too few opportunities to contact English after class. (2) The teaching materials of college oral English are mostly limited to textbooks, and the English materials that students come into contact with are too monotonous in form and not rich in content. English teaching is still more a test-oriented teaching rather than stimulating students' interest in learning English actively. (3) Students have too few opportunities to practice oral English, which is far from achieving the communicative purpose of language learning both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3 Strategies and methods

Based on immersion teaching method and language input and output theories, college oral English teaching may seek strategies and methods to solve the problems and get rid of the difficulties in the following three aspects.

(1) The successful experience of immersion teaching in multiple languages around the world provides us with a model for language learning and shows the importance of the establishment of language environment in language learning. In order for learners to acquire a language faster and better, it is necessary to create conditions as far as possible so that learners can "immerse themselves" in the language environment, have more contact with the target language, and use the target language more often, so as to achieve the goal of using the language proficiently and having a free communication. Hu Zhuanglin, a professor in the English Department of Peking University, said: "To learn a foreign language well in China's foreign language environment, you will get a good teaching effect if you can make efforts in simulating or constructing the environment for contacting and using the foreign language (that is, the second classroom)."^[5] In the practice of college oral English teaching, teachers should make efforts both in class and after class to create an "immersive" language learning environment for students as much as possible. In class, teachers should completely abandon the "teacher-centered" theory, adhere to the "student-centered" and "activity-centered", give the class to students, give the time to students, let the students talk more and make full use of the time in class to practice, and the teacher only gives guidance and simple comments and refrain from instructing too much. Oral class time is tight, the task is heavy, and the number of students is large. If teachers occupy too much time in class, students will have less opportunities to practice oral English. Teachers should make clear the teaching tasks, arrange the teaching time reasonably, leave more class time to students after completing the necessary knowledge points, encourage students to speak, and enrich the classroom oral practice through individual presentation, role play, group discussion and other forms, so as to mobilize students to actively participate in class activities. After class, teachers can request or guide students to conduct oral practice in various forms such as oral class preview, oral class homework, video recording of oral activities, and oral exams. College oral English class should not be limited to classroom teaching, like other subjects, oral English class should also include pre-class preview, after-class review and homework, and oral English, as a language and a communication tool, should pay more attention to its practical use after class. Only through students' large amount of oral practice and more involvement into oral English learning, students' language ability can be improved, and a more positive language learning environment can be created. In addition to the time in class and after class, teachers can also make use of the time before class and between classes to play English songs or short English videos, communicate with students in English, carry out English games, etc., so as to "immerse" students in the English environment to the maximum extent. Classes, departments and the college should work together, to establish a second oral English classroom, build a language center open to all the students, give full play to the leading role of English majors and foreign language school, organize a variety of oral English activities, combine language and cultural communication with language skills learning,

and combine education with entertainment to promote learning, so as to create a strong English atmosphere and a good English learning environment on campus.

(2) Language input theory holds that language learners with minor psychological barriers will naturally acquire a second language as long as they are exposed to a large number of understandable language inputs slightly higher than the learner's current level in a proper language environment. The process of language acquisition cannot be separated from language input. Only when students are exposed to a large amount of actual language, can they understand language knowledge, improve language skills, and gradually master the language. In teaching college oral English, teachers should provide students with sufficient language input materials, which can be used for classroom teaching, preparation before class or supplement after class. The more abundant language materials students have access to, the closer they can get to the real language, the better they can understand the rules and situations of language use, and the more accurately they can master and use the language. While the quantity of language input is ensured, the quality of language input cannot be ignored, which is directly related to the effectiveness of the input. With the popularity of the Internet and the development of various media, all kinds of language related texts, audios, videos and other materials are extremely rich. What kind of language input materials to choose, what kind of language input content and form more suitable for college students' oral English learning, these are issues that every oral English teacher should seriously consider. Firstly, the language input material should be liked and accepted by students. Language input theory emphasizes the interestingness and non-grammatical arrangement of language input materials. Students are more likely to accept language input in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. The cultivation of interest in language learning is often more important than the imparting of language knowledge itself, and can have a more lasting impact. English songs, English movie highlights, short English videos, etc., are good choices for language input materials. Only when students are interested in input materials and willing to accept them, can language input play a subtle role on the basis of quantity accumulation. Secondly, the language input material should be understandable and easy to be accepted by students. Language input theory emphasizes that the input materials should only be slightly higher than the learners' current level. Too fast speaking speed and too difficult materials will only increase students' fear and anxiety of language learning, discourage students' enthusiasm, and further affect the smooth development of oral English teaching. Therefore, teachers must carefully choose the language input material to ensure that the vast majority of students can understand and accept it. Thirdly, teachers should make good use of the massive resources provided by the Internet and various media, constantly update the content of language input, and adopt various forms of language input, so that students can feel the beauty of language and master language knowledge and skills. Language materials that are related to the culture of English-speaking countries, close to students' daily life, or can reflect the current and contemporary concerns are good choices for language input. In short, what content and form of language input to choose may directly affect the quality and effect of language input, which must be paid attention to and fully considered by oral English teachers.

(3) Language output theory holds that learners must have the opportunity to use the language they learn in order to learn it effectively. The process of language output is a

process in which students test and revise their language knowledge, and then absorb and internalize it. College oral English class aims to cultivate students' oral English expression ability and realize the communication function of English as a language. Oral English teachers should pay special attention to students' language output, encourage students to speak more and practice more, and make corresponding requirements and give corresponding guidance about students' language output from various aspects like quantity, quality and form. Firstly, the quantity of students' language output should be increased. Only through a large amount of language output, can students find and solve problems in the process of continuous language output, make up for knowledge defects, and constantly improve their language ability. The improvement of students' oral English level is inseparable from a large number of language output. Without sufficient output, no matter how much knowledge reserve students have, their English is dumb English. The significance of language as a communication tool is lost. However, only relying on the limited class time of college oral English is certainly far from enough. Teachers should try their best to leave the class time to students and let students practice as much as possible in class, and at the same time, come up with ways to make full use of students' extracurricular time. At present, most students don't spend a lot of time on oral practice after class, but they do hope to have the opportunity to express themselves, show themselves, practice their oral English, and improve their oral English level. Teachers can motivate students' enthusiasm for language output by assigning oral tasks, organizing the second English class, encouraging students to record English videos and other forms, so that students can devote more time to the study and practice of oral English, and have more opportunities to apply what they have learned, express their thoughts and show themselves. The quantity of students' oral output should be larger. Secondly, the quality of students' language output should be strictly controlled. The purpose of making students carry out language output is to give students the opportunity to use what they have learned, find problems, correct them and get improved in the process of completing tasks, so that they can practice repeatedly and constantly enrich and improve themselves, rather than to allow students to hand in a task without any progress or gain. Therefore, when assigning oral output tasks, teachers must put forward clear and detailed standards and requirements for specific tasks. They can guide students' oral output by showing students good examples, formulating specific scoring rules, conducting process intervention, and carrying out multi-dimensional evaluation. Thus, students can truly get exercise in the process, make efforts to complete the task in high quality, and achieve the purpose of improving their language ability. Thirdly, the forms of students' language output should be more diversified. Language output should give students the opportunity to have a lot of oral practice and guide them to complete it in high quality, but at the same time it should not give excessive burden to students and cause students' aversion and resistance. Stimulating and maintaining students' interest in the learning process should always be put in the first place. The forms of language output can be varied. As long as students have been trained in the process of output and their language ability has been improved, the purpose of students' language learning has been achieved. Monotonous and repeated forms of language output are not enough to stimulate students' inner potential and enthusiasm for learning. Young students are full of imagination and creativity, and easy to accept

new things. Moderate challenging tasks and diverse task settings often yield unexpected surprises. Nowadays, with abundant network resources and the prevalence of we-media, various new technologies, new means and new platforms continue to emerge, and language, as a communication tool, is flexible, vivid and full of vitality. Therefore, teachers should set less limits, encourage more and give students more independent space to try different forms of language output.

4 Conclusion

College oral English, as an important part of college English which is a compulsory course for all non-English majors in various colleges and universities of China, has been taking on the important task of training English application talents for the country and the society. At the same time, it has been faced with difficulties due to the constraints of class hours and class types. Students do not have enough time for oral practice in class, and have too few opportunities to contact and use oral English after class, which is far from meeting the needs of students to improve their oral English and the needs of society for graduates with high language ability. Immersion teaching method tries to create a good language learning environment for students, increases the opportunity for students to contact and use the target language, and enables students to "immerse" in the target language environment and naturally carry out language learning. Language input theory emphasizes that language learners should be exposed to a large amount of understandable language input slightly higher than the current level of learners with the help of the language environment, and proposes that the optimal language input should be understandable, interesting, non-grammatical arrangement, and sufficient. Language output theory proposes that language learners must have the opportunity to use the language they learn in order to learn it effectively. The process of language output is the process of absorbing and internalizing language knowledge. College oral English teaching can get inspiration from the above three theories and seek ways to deal with the difficulties it is faced with. How to create a good English learning environment for students in the concrete oral English teaching practice, provide students with abundant and suitable oral English input materials, and let students have more opportunities to practice and demonstrate oral English, this topic is worthy of more specific and in-depth research and discussion.

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