

Plights and Solutions of English Listening Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract. English listening teaching level in higher vocational colleges is one of important contents deciding whether students can correctly apply English language skills. Currently, English listening teaching in Chinese higher vocational colleges is not optimistic and some problems cannot be ignored. English listening teaching has great difficulties and has become a significant bottleneck restricting vocational English teaching. This paper analyzes plights of English listening teaching in higher vocational colleges and puts forward solutions to get rid of the plights.

Introduction

Under the general background in which the state actively promotes vocational education, Chinese higher vocational education has gained good development in recent years. Vocational English as one of significant subjects must be subject to requirements of personnel training for foreign language communication competence. So, vocational English listening teaching should follow the teaching objective of practicability dominance and application as the purpose and enhance English application ability construction. Thus, vocational English listening teaching should comply with the principle of practicability dominance and enough application and pay equal attention to English language foundation and application ability. But, vocational English listening teaching quality cannot meet actual needs of vocational college students. So, in vocational English listening teaching, how to boost students' listening skills is a topic vocational English teachers must deeply ponder over. This paper tries to study plights and solutions of vocational English listening teaching.

Plights of English listening teaching in vocational colleges

(I) Vocational college students easily suffer mental blocks

At present, some students in higher vocational colleges do not or rarely contact special English listening study in senior high schools. Besides, foundation English education puts particular emphasis on reading and writing and neglects listening and speaking all the time. Vocational college students often only know the forms and meanings, but do not know pronunciation. Such phenomenon is very general. When contacting English listening teaching in higher vocational colleges, students generally cannot adapt listening course and can understand few contents. Thus, they easily have nervous mood and feel passive. The potential problem for vocational college students during English study is mental block. The main representation is that their mentality is not stable enough. Thus, it is hard for them to focus to enter the learning state.

(II) The listening materials are relatively difficult

In daily listening teaching process, students often put forward the following problems: which materials are good? Where can proper listening materials be found? Students often feel the listening materials are too difficult so that they lose learning interest and self-confidence. On the contrary, once listening materials are too simple, this goes against improving students' listening level. As time passes, students will generate blindness for listening materials. Currently, listening materials of higher vocational colleges often adopt English listening materials. Features and differences of vocational college students will cause that they do not adapt vocational English listening teaching. Although in recent years listening materials of higher vocational colleges have greatly improved, they are still not ideal enough.

(III) Vocational college students lack social and cultural background knowledge

Language is the carrier of culture. Specific culture will generate corresponding characteristic

language background. Besides, language can be mostly influenced by social and cultural background in terms of direct communication. So, once vocational college students do not understand cultural mode and norms, they cannot really learn corresponding language. But, influenced by exam-oriented education and other objective factors, vocational college students frequently have narrow knowledge range. In particular, they quite lack the knowledge of social and cultural background. The differences between Chinese and western cultures are large so that students cannot accept and understand.

(IV) The quality of vocational English teachers is low

Firstly, overall structure of English teacher team is not rational enough. The number of young teachers is too large, while expert-type teachers with rich experience are few. The number of English teachers with bachelor's degree is large, while the number of English teachers with master's degree and above is small. Secondly, English teachers fail to rationally arrange listening teaching. Although almost all teachers realize important significance of listening teaching, most teachers fail to implement scientific and systematic consideration of training objectives in different stages in practical teaching. Thus, listening class becomes single listening test course. Thirdly, teaching methods lack enough pertinence. The current situation where English listening levels of vocational college students have large differences results in quite large difficulty for English teachers' teaching. Under the condition where the overall number of vocational English teachers is relatively small, the same English teacher often undertakes several English listening courses in several majors. Thus, teachers often unitize English listening teaching and fail to apply different teaching methods for different majors and different students.

Solutions to get rid of English listening teaching plights in higher vocational colleges

(I) To assist vocational college students in coping with negative effects caused by mental factors

Aiming at mental problems of vocational college students, teachers should set forth features, process and methods of English listening teaching to students, really help them establish self-confidence and overall overcome sense of anxiety so that they can realize the difficulty and gradualness of listening training. In listening teaching process, English teachers can start from foundation listening teaching and effectively grasp the principle from difficulty to simpleness and from simpleness to complexity to explain and train. For example, prior to listening teaching, teachers can put forward some new words, prompt difficult points and key words and arrange some questions. When vocational college students run into new words or difficulties, teachers should encourage them and focus on new contents. Teachers should not only help vocational college students overcome difficult points in teaching, but also urge them focus their attention and enhance their self-supervision ability. Obviously, cultivation of good mental quality for vocational college students is a required important factor for improving listening level.

(II) To promote English listening learning initiative of vocational college students

Only when vocational college students pay high attention to English listening course inwardly and take more active part in English listening course can they transform huge pressure to new driving force. Meanwhile, this is also important basis to learn English listening course well. Thus, English listening teachers should not just carefully teach every class, but also help vocational college students cultivate learning initiative and establish strong self-confidence in English listening learning. English teachers should establish harmonious classroom atmosphere, focus on wording, prevent the words damaging students' self-esteem, encourage students to actively learn and establish self-confidence. Under the precondition where students own self-confidence, teachers should also correct their wrong learning methods to improve listening teaching effects. If necessary, movie teaching method can be applied in listening teaching to boost students' English listening level. Besides, teachers should enhance students' interest in English listening learning and arouse English learning motivation.

(III) To rationally select English listening materials

Teaching materials are important reference for vocational college students and the important

carrier for teachers to carry out listening teaching. Thus, it is very important to apply rich English listening materials. Vocational college students should closely contact real listening materials so as to more proficiently apply English knowledge and skills learn in class and accelerate the course of transformation to real language from non-real language. Therefore, teachers should comprehensively know listening ability of vocational college students, select suitable listening materials according to listening ability of students and should not apply the same type of listening materials for the whole class. During selecting listening materials, not just the difficulty but also interestingness should be taken into account. At the initial stage, simple stories or cartoons should be selected. Then, it is necessary to deepen listening teaching contents and apply original English material as far as possible to let students listen to pure English. Meanwhile, when providing listening materials for vocational college students, teachers should help them know well various topics, make students with different learning degrees to listen to English listening materials with different contents and try to arouse their learning initiative.

(IV) To enhance learning of social and cultural background knowledge

Social and cultural background knowledge is closely related to listening comprehension. So, listening comprehension plays an important role in enhancing learners' ability to describe and reason strategies, reducing dependence on voice and more accurately comprehending listening materials. In order to improve listening ability of vocational college students, cultural obstacles caused by cultural differences must be overcome so as to consciously and carefully know western culture, daily language habits and behaviors, consciously boost English application thinking and strive to eliminate great interferences resulted from native language. Contents of listening materials will generally involve political, economic, cultural and living common sense of western countries. So, in English listening teaching, teachers should not just introduce cultural background of some western countries such as Britain and America and cultural differences between China and western countries, but also actively encourage vocational college students to read more comprehensively, master and accumulate more social and cultural background knowledge, practically promote their degree of familiarity with listening materials and more accurately comprehend listening teaching contents.

(V) To promote improvement of English teaching team

English teachers in higher vocational colleges should actively construct more comprehensive knowledge structure and devote themselves to improving individual education background. At the same time, higher vocational colleges should accelerate to cultivate full-time teachers, encourage English teachers to carry out study on English listening teaching, establish rational appraisal system, promote it to comply with post requirements and create more conditions for improving English teachers' teaching and scientific research ability. In addition, it is necessary to form rational appraisal mechanism for part-time English teachers, listen to their course regularly, inspect their teaching programs and continuously enhance management force for part-time English teachers. Meanwhile, information network for externally employed English teachers should be set up to introduce more excellent personnel through multiple approaches. Of course, it is also required to formulate corresponding preferential policy to attract part-time teachers and actively maintain the stability of existing part-time English teaching team to shorten adaptation period in teaching.

(VI) To give vigorous play to leading role of English teachers in listening teaching

Firstly, actively change listening teaching attitude, guide listening teaching actively and mobilize enthusiasm of vocational college students. In English listening teaching process, teachers cannot simply play English listening materials and should avoid vocational college students in passive reception position. English teachers can depend on their own professional knowledge, cultural quality and teaching ability to create good teaching atmosphere and better give play to individual charm to make vocational college students generate interest in learning contents and activities. At the same time, English teachers should make abstract contents concrete and teach in the way students can easily accept in accordance with the difficulty of teaching contents and students' ability to accept knowledge. What's more, English teachers should fully mobilize students' learning initiative, transform passive learning to active learning and continuously improve their English

listening ability.

Secondly, improve English listening teaching means and continuously improve English listening teaching quality. Teachers should more rationally apply multimedia for teaching, make teaching contents more three-dimensional so as to boost teaching efficiency and students' learning enthusiasm. Vocational English teachers should give full play to their leading role, effectively combine traditional teaching modes and modern teaching methods and make the two supplement each other and exert important functions of multimedia in vocational English listening teaching.

Thirdly, actively consolidate listening teaching foundation. In order to boost listening comprehension ability, very solid English language knowledge must be owned. Thus, English phonetics knowledge should be supplemented actively. English teachers should teach phonetic symbols well, strictly supervise learning of phonetic symbols and make students lay a solid foundation for phonetics so as to get twofold results with half the effort. Meanwhile, it is required to enhance teaching of English listening strategies. For example, teachers can guide vocational college students to reason and guess, guide them to size key words and important information and actively guide them to take classroom learning notes well.

Conclusions

In general, promotion of listening skills of vocational college students is a long-term systematical project. Vocational English teachers should fully combine features of each major in listening teaching, teach students in accordance with their aptitude, continuously explore objective laws of English listening teaching, active try new listening teaching thoughts, organically combine each listening teaching link and guide students to better boost listening ability. In this way, students can realize improvement of comprehensible English quality and prepare for future work.

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