

# The Cultivation of English Listening and Speaking Skills of College Students

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**Abstract-**With the rapid development and popularization of multimedia and network, English learning is undergoing a historic transformation. Making full use of network technology to cultivate students' ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and enhancing English language skills to achieve the target of communication is the guiding principle of English teaching. On the contrary, the current situation of college English teaching is not optimistic and students have great difficulty in listening and speaking. Combining with the actual teaching situation in class, the author employs a variety of teaching methods to promote the students' interest in English and enhance their listening and speaking skills.

**Key Words:**College English; Listening and Speaking Skill; Teaching Reform; Exploration and Practice

## I. INTRODUCTION

College English course is a required public fundamental course for college students. teaching goal of College English is to foster integrated applied abilities in English, especially listening and speaking competence, to make them have an oral and written communication in English effectively in the future work and social interactions. The motivation of acquiring a foreign language is exceedingly vital. Motivation is a kind of interior stimulus, an emotional effect, a formidable aspiration to take actions. If English appeals to learners who harbor the idea that English is useful to them extremely, they are extremely likely to make fast-speed progress in English learning.

In order to accommodate to college English teaching reform, English teachers are required to study the origin of learning motivation as to enhance the quality of college English teaching. According to the current actual situation, they aim to cultivate students' comprehensive application ability, strengthen their autonomous learning ability and improve integrated cultural literacy in order to accustom to requirement of the economic development and international communication. Accordingly, the cultivation of college students' English listening and speaking is of tremendous significance in the process of college English teaching. Meanwhile, how to overcome the students in listening and speaking and improve their comprehensive ability will be a problem to be solved.

## II. THE FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING ABILITY

For English learners, the enhancement of listening and speaking ability is a universal and difficult issue. The author in the teaching practice observes that the weakest items in English learning are listening and speaking among five items --- listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. So, what are the factors influencing students' listening and speaking skills?

### A. From Students' perspective

#### 1) Effects of psychological obstacle

Students cherish the fear so as to form the psychological barrier because of lacking well-knit basic skill, such as insufficient standard pronunciation and intonation, poor master of sentence structure, ambiguity of English grammar, poor job in reading and recitation. Most students usually make low and small voice, even they are afraid of making mistake. Gradually, the phenomenon evolves into a vicious circle. In the long term, English listening and speaking teaching will be immersed in "strange circle", conducting to low foreign language teaching efficiency.

#### 2) Ignorance in English listening and speaking skills training

Many college students take vocabulary and grammar knowledge as a measure of English proficiency. Under the guidance of this idea, many students focus on learning vocabulary, grammar rules and exercise practice, in order to get high score in the written examination. Whereas, listening and speaking training seems to have nothing to do with English- learning. They don't attach great importance to listening and speaking training in thought, taking them as the very thing in English class.

#### 3) Poor English background

Although students dare to open their mouths to speak English, the overall expression quality in spoken English is not high. Firstly, in view of the poor grasp of the most elementary English pronunciation and intonation, they speak English with a local accent. Secondly, English learners can't put written English which they learned from the text into oral English practice properly. The problems which can be witnessed are as follows. The use of vocabulary among

English learners is not various and colorful, which still stays in the high school stage. Their oral English mixed with simple sentence even broken words is not fluent. Lastly, English learners can voice comments on certain topics, but lack depth. Occasionally, they are not competent in speaking of some key points.

#### *B. From the teacher's perspective*

##### *1) The lag in teaching thought*

Although the dawn of the 21st century witnessed the improvement of the higher school teaching conditions, teaching methods and teaching theory and so on and so forth has a new development. Under the influence of the traditional "teacher-centered" teaching model, teachers only concentrate on the accuracy of language form ignoring the learners' language requirements for the individual, and occupies most of the time of the class. Students have no chance to take part in oral English practice. As a result, their learning initiative and autonomous learning consciousness are so weak that the phenomenon of "deaf English" and "dumb English" is still very common.

##### *2) Dull teaching methods and obsolete teaching facilities*

For a long time, we adopt the single and dated teaching modes in which "teacher-centered" and "cramming education" is the primary trend in college English teaching. Teachers in class spare no effort to elaborate on grammar structure, illustrate words usages and so called "know-how" in the English test. While, students in class sit there passively accepting the knowledge. Teachers themselves chiefly stress on the teaching material itself, cardinally centering on the reading comprehension of the text and the interpretation of grammar and vocabulary neglecting the cultivation of the students' listening and speaking skills. Additionally, as the enrollment expansion of colleges with the increasing growth of students number in recent years, the initial teaching facilities scarcely meet the need of enormous class capacity. Confronted with the shortage of teaching auxiliary facilities and immense class capacity, it is hardly facile to stir students' enthusiasm and initiative to participate in oral English training.

##### *3) Disconnection of teaching, learning and application*

For the time being, examination-oriented education system plays the dominant role in universities, nevertheless, the practical education is rare. As is known to all, College English Test Band 4 and Band 6, as the large-scale and profound-influenced test, exert a positive influence on improvement of teaching quality and English-learning of students. Nonetheless, many colleges link grades of College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 with teachers' evaluation, professional title in teaching and degree certificate of students, which leads to teachers emphasizing on cultivating students' ability to the test. To make matters worse, the employers merely value candidates' exam results when recruiting personnel disregarding the employees' talents in other aspects and fields. Meanwhile, students make the sea tactical, study skills in order to pass the examination even get high score, resulting in lacking of listening and speaking

skills training and becoming the "deaf and dumb English. Under the tangible and intangible pressure of colleges and society as well as the guidance of the examination, College English teaching deviates from the genuine objectives of English teaching and walks into the "examination-oriented education" unintentionally to bring about the disconnection of "teaching" "learning" and "application". If we do change students' learning objective for test, the English teaching aim would not be implemented effectively.

##### *4) Insufficient quantities and the overall low level*

College English teachers commonly assume the heavy teaching task due to the insufficient number of teachers. Most teachers take average 20 period classes or so per week, which contributes to little time and energy spent on teaching research and learning by them. That teachers barely put all their heart into "teaching" devaluing self-taught attributes to heavy teaching assignments. Their teaching idea scarcely keep breast with the situation of reform and innovation. Still other teachers need further improvement in pronunciation, grammar and cultural perspectives.

### III. THE EXPLORATION AND PRACTICE OF IMPROVEMENT IN LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

#### *A. 2.1 A good ideological basis*

Teachers should have students understand that the teacher just acts as a guide and helper and that they are supposed to attach great importance on cultivating the ability of practical application in English on the basis of the reading and writing. Only if we lay solid foundation on the indispensable phonetics can students' confidence be greatly enhanced. Thus, my university attempts to give a thorough transformation in teaching reform from the traditional English teaching pattern to "listening and speaking - centered" and "student-centered" mode on freshmen.

#### *B. Grasp of students' psychology and improvement of the students' psychological quality*

I never fail to encourage students to speak English in class from time to time, providing students speak English more practice opportunities. Enthusiastic help, appropriate guidance, a relaxing environment, an amiable face and even an encouraging look would be a enormous incitement.

#### *C. Variety of teaching form and the improvement on teaching*

Currently, teachers are no longer a simple deliver but a director, a conductor, a organizers or a host and a facilitator who furnishes convenience for the students. Therefore, teachers should organize a short dialogue, English report, English drama, English interview, English debating competition and so on to trigger the concern of students. It is very crucial that the students take turns to be a teacher to give a detailed illustration towards some boring words in the text. The audience of students filled with curiosity and worship will relish the class, taking notes carefully and arouse the passion for English. .

#### D. 2.4 Building more listening and speaking environment

We should impel students to use English on campus and in extracurricular activities, making them realize that English could be put into use anywhere and anytime. It is no exaggeration to say that dormitory can be built a small English-speaking environment. Some English website and global chat software can be introduced to students, using the Internet to obtaining more information and interacting with foreign friends online to enlarge their horizon and widen their outlook. At present, some university students are equipped with wireless headphones listening to English language teaching program which gain substantial prevalence among students.

#### E. Making full use of multimedia and network technology to strengthen listening and speaking training

##### 1) The necessity of network technology in English listening and speaking teaching

As the proverb goes, "interest is the best teacher", and it is nearly impossible to learn English well, especially speaking and listening skills when demonstrating no interest in it. The diversified application of the network technology with abundant website resources to English learning can solve the very problem to make English exert great fascination on students. From cognitive psychology theory, English learning is the combination of language and image. The network abounds in rich resources that combine voice, text, with the images organically. Multiple sensory and perception is more comprehensive and profound than auditory learning, which stimulates the students' motivation for English learning. Consequently, students can acquire knowledge in a relaxing and delightful atmosphere, promoting individuals' all-round development. Learning motivation and attitude are the two primary factors, in which positive learning motivation and attitude contribute to achieve corresponding study level and goal. Strong learning motivation, soaring learning enthusiasm and excellent learning behavior result in sound learning effect, and vice versa.

##### 2) The feasibility of network technology in English listening and speaking teaching

The new teaching mode based on network provides support conditions for the cultivation of listening and speaking skills. Multimedia can be used to overcome the defect of traditional class model which lacks speaking and listening time. Students can be available to listen to the tape or imitate videos clips according to their own demand. Meanwhile, students have an access to watching directly English movies, TV shows and teaching program on the Internet, or even communicate with people from English-speaking countries.

Teachers should implement diversification on material selection, such as movies, TV shows, English songs, a variety of short news to stimulate student from visual and auditory aspects. Teachers are required to answer questions according to the students' specific requirements, thus boosting the training efficiency gigantically. To assist students in setting up a good network learning environment, the multimedia network lab can be built for students in class and extracurricular self-learning. Students should be given full training, and they should be rendered their own online learning account, which can be available used in extracurricular autonomous learning which teachers can also be a supervisor.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In order to adjust to the trend of college English listening and speaking teaching reform, drastic actions should be taken to find the problems in practice from many aspects, such as the teaching thought, students' psychology, teaching methods, language environment, and fully application of website multimedia. Only in these above-mentioned approaches can we enhance students' English actual application skills to adapt to the social development needs.

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