

Discussion on the Strategies and Difficulties of Teaching and Learning in English News Listening

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Abstract—English news listening, as a meaningful part in learning and teaching of the English language, has not received enough attention in higher education, which has brought a negative effect on English-majors' learning and the development of subject education in listening. This thesis will introduce the importance of English news listening, and the difficulties that students face because of the special characteristics of English news. It will provide three effective strategies on teaching and learning in English news listening. The thesis will enrich future learning and teaching in this field for English majors in colleges and universities, which will help students' to learn more efficiently and offer useful opinions to teachers for their teaching planning, thus leading to better quality English major students and listening courses.

Keywords—English news, Listening Teaching, college students, strategies, English majors

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE OF ENGLISH NEWS LISTENING

English News listening is a significant part of the content of English listening. The ability to understand news listening is an important criterion for English majors in their knowledge composition and communication skills. According to the "English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities" [1], the goal of the English-major student is to create a solid English language foundation and a broad knowledge of culture and to proficiently engage in translation, teaching, management, and research in many specific fields including foreign affairs, education, economics, trade, culture, science and technology, and military, as well as others. To achieve this goal, English listening as one of the four elements of learning English, plays an indispensable role in the process of learning, and the listening comprehension of English broadcast news with its language, vocabulary and cultural characteristics determines its universal significance for English learning.

Most materials for news listening are derived from the television and broadcast media of English-speaking countries, which report on all aspects of social life covering politics, economics, culture, education, sports, science and technology, and other topics [2]. It is the most direct and lively reflection of English-speaking society and one of the best materials for English majors to understand the culture related to English. Language is the carrier of culture, and the study of language results in the transmission and spread of culture [3]. Contacting and understanding the culture of other countries is one of the most efficient ways to broaden students' horizons and cultivate critical thinking. Therefore, it can be seen that English news listening practice has a meaningful position in learning more about diversified cultures for language learners in the context of globalization.

The news listening materials contain a lot of new and old vocabulary words and new language phenomena generated in the use of the English language; studying this emerging vocabulary and language phenomena helps in understanding the latest trends in English language development. For English major learners, it can increase the interest in language learning, and constantly update students' cognition and accumulation of language learning.

The formal style of the English news listening material is more rigorous; therefore, it is different from daily communicative language in sentence structure and syntactic features. The latter mainly uses short sentences with relatively random sentence structures. The use of long sentences with relatively complicated structure puts forward higher requirements for language ability and listening comprehension [4]. It also determines that listening teaching of English news is different from listening comprehension teaching of daily spoken language. All English major exams in higher education set up a news listening section. Therefore, for college or university students who major in English to gain excellent English learning skills and achieve good grades, news listening cannot be ignored.

II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF LEARNING ENGLISH NEWS LISTENING

A. Inadaptability to the Pronunciation Characteristics of English News

The prominent feature of international English news is that the broadcast speed is fast and the pause time is short. Its broadcast speed is about 140 words per minute. In a short period of time, the information that students can record, only by memory, is very limited, which causes students to have certain difficulties in understanding the article, and leads to anxiety and resistance towards practicing [5]. In addition, the characteristics of international English news speed are often accompanied by speech phenomena such as liaison, slurring words, reducing sounds, and incomplete plosion during the broadcast process. In news broadcasting, such skills make announcers' pronunciation more labor-saving and their language more fluid, but it is undoubtedly an obstacle for English majors in the English learning period. Moreover, it is a struggle for students to seize the news content, even after repeated listening, due to accent changes in parts of speech of words and the interference of background noise in the news. All the pronunciation features mentioned above in English news listening materials are the difficulties that English major students need to overcome during the learning process.

B. *The Lack of Cultural Background Knowledge in News.*

The experience of learning different cultures is the beneficence and adventure that learning language brings learners. Anglo-American cultural knowledge is not familiar for students in universities especially who are not interested in international news or have not traveled abroad because they have had limited contact with cultural knowledge when they were in high school. However, the materials for English listening consist mainly of international news, which relates to international current affairs and cultural exchange. Therefore, the lack of knowledge in this area will hinder understanding of the news listening content. The news background refers to the reason, environment and subjective and objective conditions of the news facts, and is also important information to supplement or restore the news facts and to highlight or contrast the news topics. In news, the background is not the ontology, and its role is a supplementary explanation of the ontology of the news facts. The lack of cultural background knowledge seriously affects the understanding of English news. News can be simple, especially current affairs news, and will not provide a cultural setting, which requires students who want to be proficient in English to have certain background knowledge for cultural understanding. Therefore, English major students who do not keep up with current events and do not pay attention to the news have trouble understanding the overall meaning expressed by the news even when they recognize all the words spoken in a broadcast.

C. *Weakness of Language Foundation in English News Listening*

The weakening of basic teaching of English listening and English pronunciation in high schools has caused the consequence that students are not competent to speak proper English and acquire English listening skills even though their writing and reading levels in English are qualified before they enter higher education institutions. Teaching English news listening is less implemented when compared to basic English listening teaching. Although the language foundations in vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing are solid for English majors, the basics of news English listening is deficient because of the lack of teaching and learning the language in this certain field. Large professional vocabulary, proprietary names, fixed formats, longer sentences, more functional words and more abbreviations are all characteristics of news listening language. Due to the needs of news reports, there are also abbreviations in names of places, persons, institutions, and organizations. All of which have a great impact on the understanding of listening. Students are also required to master the sentence patterns of English news. Because of the urgency of time, news reports generally have a short length, and most of the passages adopt highly-extended simple sentences, compressing content-rich sentences such as apposition and prepositional phrases into them. Therefore, English news listening has certain specific requirements for the language foundation of English major students

III. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH NEWS LISTENING

A. *Enhancing News Listening Teaching in the Era of Quality-Oriented Education*

In this era of quality-oriented education, students are the main part of the class. Student-oriented is a quintessential teaching concept of this era [6]. Teachers, as a function of their teaching careers, should strengthen the emphasis on the subjective status of students, and aim to improve the students' comprehensive ability. In the teaching process, the traditional concept of education must be reformed. The traditional English listening and speaking education is a simple class exercise, using CDs or tapes as the material for exercises. Students have little learning resources during the learning process. In the process of modern education, it is necessary to change the traditional concepts. In the course of listening teaching, teachers must enrich the material, not only listening to the materials required by the textbooks and outlines, but also applying other materials including English news. These can be used as important materials in the process of listening education. Because the English majors' listening levels are different [7], some students have a solid foundation, while other students have a weak foundation. Therefore, students can select appropriate news materials according to their actual situation; students with weak foundations can be provided with relatively simple vocabulary news materials. For students with solid foundations, they can be provided with comprehensive vocabulary news, so that students majoring in English can receive different levels of training. Thus helping them to get better involved and effectively improve their listening level in news listening learning.

B. *The Efficient Methods of English Listening Teaching*

College teachers should first introduce some hot topics and related background knowledge of the topic that is going to be listened to by the students in English majors [8]. This is to coordinate with cultural learning, so that students can actively predict the relevant content of the news and accelerate and enhance the understanding of the news. Many questions on the news listening tests are about the text or some specific details. The teacher can design related questions for the text, so that the students will be targeted while listening. When conducting English news training, it is requisite to attach importance to the cultivation of students' attention and help them develop good habits for listening and recording. English majors should be required to take notes on numbers, years, prices, and other relevant facts. When taking notes, it is best for students to develop their own unique shorthand to save time. English news training in the class should be dominated by intensive listening practice. Intensive listening refers to repeated playback of some representative materials, listening to it multiple times, and comprehensively and meticulously comprehending its content. This practicing method mainly serves to solve the problem of structural characteristics of news sentences, the relationship between the lead and the text, and news vocabulary and its collocation. A common method is to let the students repeat what they hear and try to keep it consistent with the original text. Teachers can pick representative news recordings in the class and repeat or play them multiple times. Through this method, English major students on the one hand can be familiar with the flow and speed of news English; while on the other hand, they can comprehensively and meticulously understand its structure, syntax and vocabulary in order to achieve a full understanding of the content. This can clear the psychological barriers in listening comprehension, and reduce psychological stress while effectively promoting the news listening effect [9]. Pan-listening can help students to be acquainted with the sense of

journalism language and familiarize them with the news structure. In addition, when facing obstacles in listening to news, students should maintain peace of mind, not be overly nervous, and be sure not to stop to listen to the rest of the passages. Students should also cultivate the ability to speculate on the context according to the clued listening. Due to the inaccurate pronunciation of the listener, the differences between the native language and English, and the influence of continuous reading, sound-saving, and intonation in the text, students often encounter some difficulties. The attention of the students is often attracted to the places that they do not understand. However, they should not grasp this point and ignore the whole context. Therefore, the teacher should emphasize in the class that some of the incomprehensible parts can be ignored and focus more on the grasping of the entire article of information.

C. Continued Practice after Class

In order to prevent English major students from interrupting English listening training, taking efforts outside the class are especially important. Teachers should organize students to actively and consciously complete the listening schedule, and require students to conduct English news intensive training for at least one hour every two days. Students can make choices of what materials they want to practice according to their own listening levels and interests [10], while the teacher provides the main sources of listening material. Intensive listening requires students to write down every word they hear in the news and also to write a one sentence summary of the news. This will not only improve listening, but also the ability of English majors to summarize and target the main purpose of the entire passage. With persistent after class work on this homework, English major students will be able to absorb the English news language they have heard, as well as be able to improve their English levels with the support of news listening.

IV. Conclusion

English News Listening is receiving more and more attention with the development of quality educational programs in institutions of higher learning. English news with its features can benefit English major students in different aspects of learning. It can broaden students' minds, consolidate their language foundations and make them highly qualified English major learners. Although there are difficulties in the process of practice for students, these situations can be improved with hard work and the help of the listening teachers. English teachers should put forth more effort in English news teaching and give effective news learning guidance with helpful homework. The available strategies that English teachers take will gradually solve problems for students major in English in their learning of English news listening.

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