

Critical Thinking-Oriented College Oral English Teaching Reform

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[Abstract] Nowadays, the English speaking and writing ability of college students has been significantly improved, but the cultivation of their critical thinking ability is obviously insufficient. This paper mainly analyzes the current situation and existing problems of college oral English teaching, and further puts forward some suggestions to promote the cultivation of critical thinking ability.

[Keywords] critical thinking; college English; oral English teaching; teaching strategies; teaching reform

Introduction

The ability of oral English is one of the important contents to measure college students' comprehensive English ability, and it is also one of the key objectives of college English teaching. With the advent of the new era, the requirements for foreign language talents are increasing. It is of great significance to deepen the reform of college English teaching for the cultivation of compound talents. Therefore, how to deepen the reform of college oral English teaching and cultivate various professional talents with good communication ability in oral English has become a common concern for major universities. Due to the rapid development of multimedia and Internet and their practical application in teaching, great achievements have been made in English teaching, such as reading, listening and so on. However, as far as oral English teaching is concerned, no significant effects have been achieved, especially in the aspects of practice and application in students' oral English ability. So, oral English teaching needs to be actively reformed to meet the needs of talent in society. Based on the ability of critical thinking, this paper will probe into the teaching reform of oral English in universities. First, this paper will analyze the present situations of oral English teaching and the reasons of the shortage of the ability of critical thinking in oral English teaching, and then put forward some suggestions on the cultivation of the ability for critical thinking in college oral English teaching, so as to make contribution to the reform of college oral English teaching.

The Status of College Oral English Teaching

As a foreign subject, English requires a lot of repetitive memory for its knowledge. Therefore, English majors tend to be better than other students in memory. It is also this kind of mechanical and traditional education that weakens the students' ability to think. If this continues for a long time, the students' ability to think will weaken, so it is difficult to have innovative ideas. Some studies have found that English majors often find it difficult to choose the title for their thesis when they are working on it. The reason is largely due to a lack of active thinking and effective analysis. In addition, when debating, there is often no strong evidence to analyze after giving a certain point of view, or the reason is not sufficient and rigorous. It is not difficult to see that the most important reason for these problems is that students' resilience has declined.

Under this model, the students trained in school will become narrower in their complete knowledge. They usually lack in thinking and analysis on problem solving. What is more serious is that after they go to work, they often have few innovative ideas. Therefore, it is difficult to cultivate the comprehensive talent who meet the requirements of the new era under the current

educational mode, because the problem of a lack of critical thinking in English majors has not been solved.

Teaching Objectives are Not Clear

First of all, the teaching objectives taught by teachers are not very clear. Although some teachers want to improve their students' oral abilities in their teaching plans, but in each class, it's not clear which activities should be designed to improve their abilities in oral English or how to organize the oral classes. Other teachers may have written in the teaching plan of a particular class how to improve students' oral ability in a certain aspect and include a design of oral activities, but they are not coherent and may even disconnected from the teaching objectives of the class before and after. In other words, teaching objectives are not consistent and systematic. What is more, the teaching plan is written first and foremost, but the actual class is often another set, that is, the teacher explains the grammar point in the whole article of the PPT courseware, but the students basically do not participate in the spoken language activities, and the teaching goal is completely ignored.

Secondly, the students' learning goals are not clear. Some students think that oral English is to read accurate words, memorize the text, sentence patterns, and achieve the correct pronunciation and intonation. There is only one macro-concept about the goal of oral learning, that is, to improve the level of oral communication. However, due to a lack of specific guidance from teachers and the lack of knowledge about how to put it into practice, there is a situation of "insufficient intention but insufficient strength". There are a few students who have no concept of the goal of oral English learning. It can be said that there is no goal for oral English learning. Only a small number of students who have a good foundation in English will set a clear goal for their oral English learning, such as completing a few tasks, accomplishing a certain goal, and reaching a certain level, etc.

Teaching Resources are Not Abundant

The main component of teaching resources is teaching materials. In the colleges, only a few use oral teaching materials. Although these textbooks are written for English-speaking foreign students, most of the contents are not very suitable for Chinese students. And some colleges even do not have specific teaching materials for oral English teaching for non-English majors, or, in other words, there are no oral English courses for non-English majors. In terms of teaching materials, what is said in the listening and speaking tutorials that go with the reading and writing tutorials is largely ignored.

Secondly, the learning resources that students can consult also have certain limitations. In addition to teaching materials, it is difficult for students to provide other uniformly managed online spoken language classes or online spoken language resources, which naturally cannot arouse students' interest in learning. In addition, the new generation of college students grow up in the Internet era, so the paper textbooks alone cannot satisfy their desire to learn.

Teaching Method are Not Novel

In essence, most teachers are still staying with traditional teaching methods, except the traditional "blackboard chalk" has been changed to a "multimedia electronic pen", although multimedia devices have entered every classroom. However, the nature of teaching methods has not changed, and multimedia has only provided teachers with a labor-saving tool. That's saying that the projection screen replaces the blackboard, and the keyboard replaces chalk. Some teachers' PPTs are a copy of the electronic teaching plan of oral English teaching, put on the projection screen, and then students are just reading in front of audio or video.

In some schools (such as Hunan City College), most of the teachers' oral activities are still an important part of the first five minutes of the duty report, but students do not show much interest, and some students only read a story or joke on stage to accomplish the task. The immutable teaching method of oral English does not arouse the enthusiasm of students to practice oral English, so it is difficult to improve their oral English expression ability. In fact, we should pay more attention to students in oral English class, reduce the input link, and make use of valuable time for language output (Lin, & Cao, 2018).

Teaching Evaluation is Not Scientific

There is no uniform standard for oral evaluation of non-English majors. Take Hunan City University and Hunan University of Commerce as examples; the requirements of the school are that the spoken English score accounts for 10% of the final total score, but there is no uniform form and standard for the specific assessment (Qin, 2017). Therefore, in order to save time, some teachers directly count the results of each issue of the duty report as an oral achievement, while the duty report is basically prepared by the students before class, and you can read or perform on stage. Therefore, basically it is not even a verbal communication. There are also a small number of teachers who give oral tests to students, but they are basically defined by the teachers. Students prepare for the examination and recite it in the middle of the exam. Real instant communication is rare. Hunan Institute of Engineering does not include oral communication in the final evaluation, so it is more difficult for students to attach importance of oral learning. Generally speaking, for the assessment and evaluation of oral communication, most ordinary universities have not issued specific evaluation methods and implementation plans currently, and the evaluation is mainly based on the subjective evaluation of teachers, which lacks the guidance of scientific theory. Therefore, students' enthusiasm for learning is not enough.

According to the reasons mentioned above, such as unclear teaching objectives, lack of abundant teaching resources, teaching methods that aren't novel, and unscientific teaching evaluation, the students are obviously not active in the process of oral English learning. There is no excitement and security when speaking in a spoken language. They are always afraid of making mistakes, and the fluency and accuracy are not satisfactory. Because there is no good evaluation mechanism incentive, no new teaching methods to guide, students gradually lose interest in oral English learning. Teachers are also disappointed in students, thus forming a vicious circle of spoken language teaching. Teachers and students' satisfaction with oral English teaching is decreasing.

The Reasons for the Shortage of the Ability of the College Oral English Teaching

There are many reasons for the shortage in the ability of the college oral English teaching. This part will analyze it from three aspects.

Content of Courses

Generally speaking, in addition to students majoring in English, the oral English teaching of other college students has been mainly concentrated on freshmen and sophomores, and at the third and fourth stage, English learning is basically stagnant except for students who need to take CET-4 or CET-6. At present, there is no high-level English education curriculum for non-English major students in the current English education program in colleges and universities. And many non-"211", "985" college English elective courses have also decreased, in which there is not only the problem of credit allocation, but also a shortage of teachers (Fang, 2018). Moreover, the content of English textbooks is not updated enough, which limits the classroom speaking. Even if college

teachers are willing to cultivate students' thinking ability in their freshman and sophomore year, it is very difficult to realize the teaching plan and progress limited by the teaching plan and progress.

Teaching Mode

At present, most of the college English education adopts the "big class" teaching method. Compared with the total number of teachers, the English teachers in colleges and universities are always in short supply. However, with the expansion of enrollment in colleges and universities, the teaching volume of college English teachers is constantly increasing. This "big class" teaching mode is also helpless. The disadvantages of this model are obvious, the interaction between teachers and students is insufficient, and the feeding teaching is the main teaching method. Because of the large number of people, limited class hours, the end of a semester, teachers can not recognize the students who want to interact from where to start (Li, Y., 2017). At the same time, due to the limitations of each class, teachers can only instill knowledge by filling the ducks in order to complete the teaching plan. Even if the teacher allows the situational teaching based on thinking and discussion to change the students' acceptance habits, the long-term filling teaching makes it difficult for students to change their acceptance habits.

Assessment System

There is a phenomenon of putting the cart before the horse in the examination system of college English education, that is to say, it reverses the importance of teaching purpose and means. At present, students' listening comprehension, translation, oral English and writing are the main factors of English education evaluation. They are not asked whether they have the ability to think or not. This kind of evaluation mode is generally reflected in the current CET-4 and CET-6 and the mid-term or final examination in colleges and universities. In oral English teaching, teachers also evaluate the students' English ability through CET-4 and CET-6 scores and the results of the mid-term or final examination. It can be said that the current assessment system is more standard, the knowledge is narrower, and the ability of students to think and explore for themselves has become the most unrecognized part of the assessment system. In 2000, students' ability to think and explore for themselves became the least noticed part of the assessment system.

Suggestions on Improving the Cultivation of Critical Ability in College Oral English Teaching

From above, this paper analyzes reasons for the shortage of the ability of the college oral English teaching, and this part will provide some suggestions on improving the cultivation of thinking ability in college oral English teaching.

Changing the Assessment System

In order to improve the thinking ability of oral English teaching, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between the aims and means of education. Only by correcting the teaching and learning methods can the purpose of college oral English teaching and learning be changed. When the aim is to cultivate the thinking ability, the teaching setup and textbook arrangement of college oral English teaching will be reformed. Specifically, it is necessary to design the assessment elements of speculative ability in the examination system, and the proportion should be equal to or more than the proportion of listening, translation, speaking and writing. The ability for thinking is mainly reflected in the ability for self-thinking and exploration. Therefore, the assessment of thinking ability in design is to take rich and diverse forms, pay attention to students' subjective

thought expression, and evaluation can take group discussion and debate, individual or group presentation, personal or group research project. A learning portfolio is helpful to stimulate students' thinking ability and creative ability. Furthermore, traditional short-term writing in the assessment is an evaluation factor that can reflect the students' ability to think and can appropriately increase the proportion of assessment. As for other aspects, it can be considered to appropriately reduce the proportion of the assessment. Although the ability for thinking is more focused on subjective aspects, it also should be based on objective criteria for the evaluation of the model. Based on college English teachers' teaching practice and the situation of students, teachers can design evaluation criteria to evaluate students' thinking ability through the aspects of logical reasoning, value evaluation and data analysis.

Changing the Teaching Mode and Content

The centralization of teaching and the outdated content of teaching materials objectively limit the teachers' ability to design speculative teaching. The author thinks that improving the thinking ability in college oral English teaching is essential to the interactivity and discussion in teaching, and some foreign teachers are more popular in oral English teaching because of their emphasis on interaction with students, and mainly in situational teaching and thematic discussion, which greatly promotes students' participation and enthusiasm (Pei, 2012). For colleges and universities where teachers are plentiful and the teaching environment permits, teachers can take small classes and divide students into different groups, allowing them to discuss relevant topics, and teachers can rate their analytical ability, and reasoning ability, etc., and the final score is included in the students' midterm or final grade. There are many articles in the current college English textbook, *College English*, that can be used as the subject of discussion. Teachers can use the article as background material to group students to discuss the topic of the article and cultivate students' thinking ability.

Stimulating Students' Critical Ability

College oral English teaching is more about classroom teaching, with English teachers as the core. However, this way to cultivate students' thinking ability has the limitation of time and space. The time for a major lesson is between 80 and 100 minutes. The peak of students' concentration is between 30 and 40 minutes. It can be said that classroom teaching is essentially passive teaching, and the acceptance of students is still low. Under this circumstance, it is necessary to strengthen students' self-directed learning and promote their spontaneous English learning through online classes and extracurricular English learning. In the teaching practice, teachers should try to let the students host the group discussion. By setting the discussion topic, and providing various English self-learning platforms, etc., the students need to prepare the materials, which are collected and analyzed by the discussion process for the moderators and the discussion groups. To carry out the comments, the students' ability to develop their thinking is better achieved. Even in the regular teaching, students often question and evaluate the usage of related words or sentences and support them with the materials they collect.

Conclusion

College education plays an important role in the field of education, and English occupies a very important position where oral English is one of the most important, so how to carry out the reform of college oral English teaching is of particular importance. Based on the critical thinking ability, this paper analyzes the reasons for the lack of speculative ability in college oral English

teaching, and puts forward some suggestions, which provides a new direction for the later research, in order to arouse people's attention to the reform of college oral English teaching.

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