

Original Paper

Strategies of Opening Up English Second Class in University

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Abstract

As an international language, English is playing a more and more important role. To be able to use English proficiently is of great importance. Through surveys, it is found that there are still some problems in students' English learning, which have seriously hindered students' mastery of English. Based on the analysis and relevant research of the surveyed students' examination results, and based on the learning theory of constructivism, Krashen's language input theory and second language acquisition theory, and the Principle of Visualizability proposed by Czech educator J. A. Comenius, this paper proposes some corresponding strategies in opening up the second class of English and improving students' English level.

Keywords

English second class, data analysis, learning approaches, countermeasures

1. Introduction

According to the learning theory of constructivism, learning is a process of meaning construction achieved through interpersonal collaborative activities with the help of others (including teachers and learning partners) in a certain context, i.e., social and cultural background, by the means of necessary learning materials and meaning construction. And “context”, “collaboration”, “conversation”, and “meaning construction” are the four major elements or attributes of the learning environment. And students should not simply and passively memorize knowledge, but rather achieve a profound understanding of knowledge and establish the acquisition of knowledge on a three-dimensional and multi-dimensional basis. To achieve these goals, relying solely on the traditional teaching of teachers in the classroom is not enough, so opening up English second class has become particularly important.

Chinese scholars have analyzed the great influence of the second-class English activities and put forth some strategies of improvement. He Jun (2022) holds that in universities the second class (including

competition type, scientific research type and social type) is of great importance in educating students and improving quality. Peng Yiyi (2021) believes that under the background of new liberal arts construction, the second-class English learning should be carried out in the way of interdisciplinary integration, and cultivate students' cultural quality and professional ability. Wan Hui (2020) puts forth that with the extensive application of self-media technology, the combination of college English second class and network technology, the connection between traditional class and second class, and the mutual promotion of the two class activities will greatly enhance students' enthusiasm for participation and autonomous learning ability. Liu Hanlu (2018) points out that English second class should follow the principles of openness, stratification and application. Xue Xiacong (2017) points out that it is an effective supplement to the first class to carry out the second class of college English teaching in application-oriented universities. Organizing colorful English second class activities can give full play to and mobilize students' initiative and enthusiasm in language learning, create a good English learning environment, provide students of different abilities with different training and improvement, and truly make students become applied talents. Gong Li (2019) puts forth that as a new extension of teaching, the second class has a variety of teaching forms, which can not only meet the diverse development needs of students, but also cultivate their practical ability.

Based on the above studies, this article investigates the current situation and existing problems in college English study, explores the approaches of opening up the second class of learning English, and proposes some corresponding strategies in opening up the second class of English and improving students' English level.

2. The Existing Problems in College English Learning and the Countermeasures

2.1 The Deficiency in English Listening input and the Countermeasures

2.1.1 The Deficiency in the input of English Listening

In the English final exam of Foshan University in the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, the maximum score for "Oral Test" is 15 points.

According to the English final exam scores of 2021 Computer Science Class 1 and Class 2, out of 77 students, 14 of them scored between 13.5 and 15 in oral English, accounting for 18.2%; 56 students scored from 12 to 13, accounting for 72.7%; 7 students with scores ranging from 10.5 to 11.5, accounting for 9.1%; 0 students with a score below 10.5 points.

According to the English final exam results of Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 of 2021 Mechanical Design, Manufacturing, and Automation, out of 68 students, 4 of them scored between 13.5 and 15 in oral English, accounting for 5.9%; 52 students with scores ranging from 12 to 13, accounting for 76.5%; 12 students with scores ranging from 10.5 to 11.5, accounting for 17.6%; 0 students with a score below 10.5 points.

According to the English final exam results of 2021 Pharmacy Class 1 and Class 2, out of 57 students, 11 of them scored between 13.5 and 15 in oral English, accounting for 19.3%; 38 students with scores

ranging from 12 to 13, accounting for 66.7%; 8 students with scores ranging from 10.5 to 11.5, accounting for 14%; 0 students with a score below 10.5 points.

According to the English final exam results of 2021 Civil Engineering Class 3 and Class 4, among the 45 students, 4 scored 13.5 to 15 in oral English, accounting for 8.9%, and 31 scored 12 to 13, accounting for 68.9%; 10 students with scores ranging from 10.5 to 11.5, accounting for 22.2%; 0 students with a score below 10.5 points.

Through research on the test papers of the surveyed students coming from different majors, it is found that the oral test scores of a large number of the non-English major students are OK, yet, there are still a small number of students who cannot communicate in English well, which shows these students' input is not enough.

As a communication tool, the cultivation of oral proficiency is crucial. Then how to improve college students' oral English level?

2.1.2 Opening Up Fresh Avenues to Improve English Listening

"Language teaching can be defined as the activities which are intended to bring about language learning." (Stern, 1983)

In the important educational work, *The Great Teaching Theory*, Comenius proposed many important teaching principles, which remain the fundamental principles that teachers today follow in their teaching activities. The Principle of Visualizability is one of them. There are various teaching methods that can be used to follow the Principle of Visualizability, including televisions, movies, slides and videotapes, etc.

Watching TV shows is a great way to learn English because the English learners can be exposed to new and interesting vocabulary, get to hear different accents, and also get a great opportunity for listening practice. Family Album U. S. A is such a TV show. This TV show has spread across the world, and been widely welcome. This English learning program presents various communicative situations. Through watching these virtual communicative situations created in it, students can clearly know what kind of communicative skills or ways of expression should be used in reality. Through imitation and simulation, through the input of authentic English pronunciation, intonation, idioms, etc., college students can express themselves through output in similar situations in reality in later days. Listening more is a necessary step of English study. Without the input of listening, the output process will not exist. And there are fantastic conversations and dialogues in this TV series. Through watching this show, students can master a large number of classic ways of expression in English.

There are also some great British reality TV shows that students can watch to improve their English. The Great British Bake Off, a cooking program, is fun and very funny. Black Mirror is a science fiction TV series. It relates how technology is used in modern society. The X Factor is the most popular singing competition on British TV. For each contestant, they always tell a story about themselves. From these stories students can get to know different tenses. It is a great way for students to pick up how to tell a story. These programs are quite worth watching and quite thought-provoking, with a lot of

interesting topic vocabulary, vocabulary related to daily communication and various situations in daily life. And students can also learn a large number of useful slang phrases. To watch these shows is also a great insight into American and British culture. And the students can get fantastic vocabulary and conversation. They can get exposed to natural English. They can hear really everyday English. Thus, it is crucial to provide students interesting and meaningful English learning materials through online channels.

Listening to BBC or VOA radio programs is another important channel for students' English language input. And in CET-4 and CET-6 examinations, the news part has been one part of the listening comprehension. Students should start with the low-speed news program. After the process of a gradual progress, they can try to listen to the English news broadcast at a faster speed. And this way of study conforms to the principle of gradual progress of Czech educator J. A. Comenius.

College students can increase their English input through listening more. Listening is the prerequisite of speaking. Before a baby opens its mouth to speak, it first goes through the process of listening. In the past, it was inconvenient for college students to study English. College students at that time could only use short-wave radio to listen to English news. They had no English programs to watch, no English films to see, and no English songs to listen to. Different from before, in this era, college students can get access to English programs, movies and songs. English teachers can guide students to study English by utilizing the online materials.

All in all, watching English programs and listening to English news programs can stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning English. It helps to promote the consolidation of students' English knowledge learned in English classes. The input of listening is very crucial to the output of speaking. If college students can increase their input through watching excellent TV programs and listening to excellent radio programs under the guidance of their English teachers, they will greatly increase their output of speaking some time later. And the extracurricular listening training is an important way to extend classroom instruction. Undoubtedly, "given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data." (Corder, 1981)

2.2 The Deficiency of English Communication Platform and the Countermeasures

2.2.1 The Deficiency of English Communication Platform

The teaching time in English class is very limited. Especially for non-English majors, the studying time in English class is quite insufficient. Every week they have only three or four English classes. And students have not enough time to practice their spoken English in class. And the chances for students to practice their spoken English in class are scarce. They lack a stage to fully express themselves, put in practice what they have learned in class, and consolidate their knowledge. This has resulted in a serious problem: They cannot speak English proficiently and skillfully. And this has resulted in another problem: they lack self-confidence and thereby feel nervous in class. Undoubtedly, this will affect the improvement of their English level. And such a scene is often seen in class: many students dare not open their mouth to speak for fear that they cannot speak well. They always keep silent. In oral test,

only a small minority of them can get a high score. The deficiency of English communication platform has become a serious problem. It seriously impedes students' English study.

In light of such a situation, it is of great necessity to create a platform of the second class, with a fantastic learning environment and atmosphere, for college students to practice their spoken English so as to make up for the deficiency of the time and situations of in-class instruction. This platform of the second class can create a real communication scenario for college students, allowing them to choose interesting ways and topics to conduct English conversation. It can help them learn to express their ideas and insights in English, so as to finally enable them to improve their spoken English level and express themselves in English skillfully and proficiently. Then, can we create such a kind of platform on university campus?

2.2.2 Hosting English Corner to Build up a Stage for English Speaking

In English study, the Principle of Visualizability plays an important role. As the outstanding Czech educator J. A. Comenius pointed out in his book *The Great Teaching Theory*, things themselves or their replacement images should be placed in front of students as much as possible, allowing them to see, touch, listen, smell, and so on.

According to the Principle of Visualizability, hosting English corner is one of the important ways to make up for the deficiency of English class teaching. It is an extension of college English in-class instruction and an important component of the "second class" of college English.

The English corner is mainly aimed at cultivating non-native language presentation capability, providing learners with a good foreign language communication environment, improving English learners' verbal aptitude through communication and interaction, integrating learning and communication, and placing the learning environment in front of students' senses to better improve their English study. Hosting English corners on university campus is of great necessity, for "knowledge can be produced only when it is applied in the situation, knowledge can not be isolated from its environment, and the best method to learn knowledge is to carry it out in the context." (John Seely Brown., Allan Collin., & Paul Duguid, 1989)

English Corner is also influenced by the second language acquisition theory. Second language acquisition theory advocates considering learners' emotional factors. A relaxed and natural language environment and atmosphere is beneficial to students' English communication, for it helps the students get rid of their negative emotions. According to Krashen's "here-and-now" principle, teachers should try their best to simulate real communication scenarios and create a language environment that is close to real language environment for students. And English corner is just such a language environment.

Oral communication is an important aspect in English study. Hosting English corner on university campus is one important way to improve oral communication. Participating in English corner can help students improve their oral skills. Thus, the English corner, as a platform to practice English speaking, is of great significance. At the English corner, students can talk freely, even with strangers. It can stimulate their enthusiasm and initiative for English learning, and enable them to enjoy the fun of

English. The English corner aims at both English majors and the students from other majors. It can promote the mutual communication among students from different majors, grades and regions, meanwhile, it can also break the barriers between teachers and students, strengthen communication and interaction and promote in-class instruction. As an important platform of second class, English corner can effectively make up for the limited class time, expand students' knowledge and enrich their extracurricular life.

Many college students hope to improve and strengthen their English speaking ability, meanwhile, they desire to make new friends. English corner is exactly such a wonderful platform. In order to enhance communicative effect, it is necessary to invite the teachers and students from English speaking countries to participate in the English corner activities, which will increase Chinese students' enthusiasm of participation, as they can engage in free talks with native speakers. Moreover, it can challenge the college students and enhance their self-confidence in speaking English well. Besides, students and teachers with good oral skills should also be invited to take part in English corner activities.

To avoid the lack of topics in communication, college English teachers can help the students arrange the topics in advance, so as to enable them to make choices from different topics and conduct oral practice through the topics they like. Moreover, college students can have sufficient time to make preparation and get ready for the upcoming conversation.

Besides English conversations, some special types of activities can be added so as to attract and stimulate not only English majors but also the students from other departments to participate. To increase the popularity of English corner, the activities in English corner should be publicized through various means, such as putting up posters or broadcasting them through campus radio, so that a large majority of students can acquire the necessary information of the English corner on university campus.

3. Conclusion

Through an analytical research of the surveyed students' examination papers, it is clearly seen that there exist some problems in current college English study. The most prominent problems are the deficiency in the input of English listening and the deficiency of the chances in English speaking. In light of the survey results of college students' examination papers, we propose some improvement strategies.

This article elaborates on the ways and strategies of organising English second class learning based on the research on students' examination papers. By analyzing and researching the current situation of students' English study, corresponding constructive strategies have been proposed so as to successfully open up English second class and improve students' English study. The data sources are authentic and reliable, with a certain degree of scientificity, which has reference significance for the development of the "second class" of English study.

In English teaching of modern times, the methodology of student-centered education is advocated. On

the stage of English teaching, the direction and effect of an English class is often determined by college English teachers' arrangement and guidance. As the director of college students' English learning, college English teachers shouldn't confine their direction and guidance to classroom teaching. The teaching time in classroom is very limited. English teachers should expand their English class. To open up English second class is of great importance. And how to open up English second class needs college English teachers' elaborate arrangement of their English teaching and intelligent guidance of their students so that their students can conduct more effective study. If English teachers can successfully open up English second class, they will surely achieve great effect in English language teaching.

The organic combination of multiple teaching methods can form a high-quality lesson. And the organic combination of multiple learning methodologies can also bring about a high-quality learning effect. "A goal of education, bilingual or other, presumably is to enable children to develop their capacity for creative use of language as part of successful adaptation of themselves and their communities in the continuously changing circumstances characteristic of contemporary life." (Hymes, 1974) We think the methodologies and strategies mentioned above will make college students learn quickly, happily, effectively, and will enable them to creatively use English in the end.

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