

# Research on College English Teaching Reform that Highlights Listening and Speaking Skills

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**Abstract:** The paper mainly introduces the background and strategies for college English reform that highlights listening and speaking skills. The paper first gives the background of the reform, then illustrates the teaching objective design. The teaching objective is divided into knowledge objective, ability objective and quality objective. And according to the paper, the main strategies of the college English reform are constructing a complete course system, reforming the teaching model, reforming college English textbooks, reforming the examination mode, and moreover, improving the college English quality course. At last the paper gives a conclusion that the implementation of the reform has had a positive effect on the training of talents and the improvement of personnel training quality.

## 1. The Background of College English Teaching Reform

College English teaching has the important mission of cultivating excellent technology-oriented specialized talents for the development of our country. It is an important part of higher vocational education in China. Nowadays more and more companies stress on their employer's practical ability. Therefore, as an important part of vocational education, college English should pay more attention to listening and speaking skills accordingly. Compound talents refer to those who understand foreign languages and professional knowledge as well. In order to research and explore the mode of compound talents training, many experts and teachers have made studies on course constructing, teaching model, teaching styles, and textbook construction. However, those experts mainly studied on how to promote students' English professional ability and how to improve English teaching to make it more professional, and little stress is put on students' practical application of English language skills, especially the training of listening and speaking ability. It is necessary for us to be aware that language is an important communication tool, and listening and speaking skills is the basis of this important tool. In class teachers should make every effort to encourage students to open their mouth by taking part in various group tasks.

English language teaching is a typical practical course. The major goal of language learning is to communicate. Language skills are also gained through repeated use and practice (use and practice of listening and speaking skills). The English teaching model based on listening and speaking requires the emphasis on the listening and speaking language skills training in the process of language teaching. The teaching is dominated by listening and speaking ability training and it pays more attention to oral tasks and the learners' exchange and expression using English.

## 2. The Strategies of College English Reform

### 2.1 Design the teaching objective and construct a complete course system

The teaching objective of the "College English" is to guide students to use language and to make communication in the workplace environment, and to train students' practical application ability to use English, especially their listening and speaking abilities. We set up the teaching objective from the perspective of knowledge, ability and quality in order to comprehensively promote students' English proficiency. The teaching objectives consist of knowledge objective, ability objective, and

quality objective, in which listening and speaking ability training is highlighted though writing and translating is also included. The knowledge objective, ability objective, and quality objective are closely related with each other. For knowledge objective, students are required to master 3500 vocabulary, basic grammar knowledge, useful expressions for daily use, the concise industry English expressions and English application writing format. For ability objective, students are required to be able to carry out oral exchange in international activities and professional business activities, to read English materials of general topic and professional topic, to translate English materials of general theme and professional theme, and to write letters for daily use as well as correspondence related to professional activities. And for quality objective, students are required to foster good learning habits, master correct learning methods, to train their own professional ability and professional quality.

Then after setting up the complete objectives for English learning, we should construct a complete course system for college English that highlights the training of listening and speaking skills to solve the problem of the original curriculum uniformity. Under the complete course system, we should program all students' English learning in college as a whole rather than only stress on the systematicness of a single course such as "Intensive English reading". We should also emphasize the importance of listening and speaking skills training so as to cultivate excellent professional talents and promote students' English proficiency and skills needed in their future careers.

After determining the course teaching objectives, our major task is to build up a curriculum system on the basis of the course teaching objectives, and then set up a college English curriculum system to promote the development of higher vocational education and modern society. The curriculum system is made up of compulsory courses, optional courses and the second classroom activities, building up a complete and comprehensive English teaching and learning system. The optional courses include: Spoken English, Secretarial English, Workplace English, Business English, Business English Listening and Speaking. The second classroom teaching activities consists of: English teaching resources bank, English radio station, English corner activities, English listening and speaking competitions, Loulan drama club, and English drama performances. The completeness of the curriculum system has enriched the teaching contents, increased students' activities, created a better English teaching and learning environment, and greatly improved the teaching efficiency.

## **2.2 Reform the teaching model.**

Based on the concept of "students-oriented and to assist in students' development", we will adopt the English teaching model that highlights the training of listening and speaking skills to solve the problems in traditional teaching that focuses on teacher's language explanation but belittle student's practical training, and stresses on language points but belittle listening and speaking ability.

In the traditional classroom teaching model, it is usually teacher-centered. The teaching method emphasizes vocabulary, intensive reading and grammar teaching, and is mostly by way of detailed explanation, aiming at helping students to master the language points. In this kind of teaching model, students are only able to recite new words, master a few pieces of grammar points. They rarely have opportunities to open their mouth to speak and express their ideas. And when they are looking for a job after graduation, they will find what they have learned in college English class do not agree with the demand of companies. Therefore, in order to cultivate new practical talents, the traditional teaching model should be changed to follow the teaching concept of "students-oriented and to assist in students' development".

The main task is to adopt the English teaching model that highlights listening and speaking skills to emphasize the training of the listening and speaking skills in the language teaching process. The new teaching model is dominated by listening and speaking and stresses on the learners' oral exchange and expression. Therefore, teachers should change their teaching methods and teaching contents from the original focus on language knowledge and intensive reading to the training of listening and speaking skills and comprehensive qualities. Teachers will give students more opportunities to carry out oral tasks. For example, students can be divided to form several groups, then teachers will give them some oral tasks to prepare before class, and students will carry out their group work in the way of making dialogues. And usually in class the teachers will set up real

situations according to the textbook or the students' majors, encourage students to brain storm and carry out discussion, and organize students to give English speeches and perform drama so as to train students' comprehensive application skills.

### **2.3 Reform college English textbooks.**

Select practical and interesting scene materials to compile textbooks and power point that highlight the training of language skills such as listening and speaking to resolve the problems in traditional textbooks that are knowledge-intensive but belittle listening and speaking skills training.

The traditional English textbooks are too comprehensive in terms of contents. There are usually six or eight units with different topics. And in each unit there will be listening, intensive reading, extensive reading, writing and translating. Every part of the listening, speaking, writing, and translating will be shown in the form of text or after class exercises. And also there is always a special grammar explanation in the end of each unit. This kind of comprehensive textbook is mainly on the basis of teaching English language knowledge. It is too boring and not creative, and it will cause students to lose their interest in learning English at last.

The main task is to use high-quality textbooks and increase the use of self-compiled textbooks. According to the new teaching concept, the giving up of traditional knowledge-intensive textbooks and the use of practical English textbooks and vocational English textbooks suitable for higher vocational education have shown better teaching effect than before. At the same time, we have compiled our own college English textbooks, such as "Practical English of Construction". It was approved as the Twelfth Five-Year national planning textbook for Vocational Education. It has been published and used by students majoring in architecture and engineering. The textbook is divided into eight units based on different situation settings. For example, there are "ancient Chinese architecture", "classical European architecture" and "modern American architecture". In the process of editing the textbook we select practical and interesting scene materials to highlight the training of language skills, weaken the traditional word and grammar parts, teach students to learn to deal with English information and materials in context, raise students' interest and improve their practical ability. The development of textbooks has enhanced English teaching and promoted the English course reforms.

### **2.4 Reform the examination mode**

The new examination mode pays more attention to process assessment, and the major content of the assessment is to test students' English listening and speaking skills and other practical application skills to solve the problem in traditional assessment of the English language course that highlights knowledge assessment but belittle the assessment of practical application skills.

Although the traditional English course assessment is also made up of two parts: process assessment and final assessment, but the process assessment merely stresses on assessment of student attendance, reciting of new words and phrases, completion of knowledge assignment, etc. The final exam focuses on the evaluation of students' reading, writing and translating knowledge. Owing to the limit of time and space, listening and speaking tests are often ignored.

According to the college English reform the main task is to increase the proportion of process assessment. The proportion of process assessment will be gradually increased to 70%, and the proportion of final assessment is only up to 30%. In the new examination mode, the process assessment mainly assesses students' practical ability in listening and speaking and other English application ability. Students are required to be able to carry out daily communication related to English listening and speaking, and meanwhile they should also be able to write correspondence and translate materials by using dictionaries. At last, students' learning files are created to record student attendance, class performance, after class assignments, group listening and speaking activities, etc. to follow the students' whole learning process. In the new examination mode, students become more active in class. They are eager to join in activities and express their views in class. So this new examination mode is a good way to promote students' listening and speaking abilities.

## 2.5 Improve the college English quality course

"College English" was rated as a quality course in 2010 at <http://112.230.250.179.8899>. With the further development of college English reform, the quality course will be further constructed and improved. We will compile electronic textbooks, record micro lecture and MOOC lecture, and establish new test question banks. Gradually all course resources can be accessed online. Moreover, Resource sharing courses are being built up currently. With the help of the platform of college English quality course, the teaching efficiency will be significantly improved and students' listening and speaking skills will be greatly enhanced.

## 3. Conclusion

The paper mainly introduced the strategies for college English reform that highlighted listening and speaking ability. The strategies include: constructing a complete course system, reforming the teaching model, reforming the college English textbooks, reforming the examination mode, and moreover, improving the college English quality course. The implementation of college English reform has broadened students' horizons, and enhanced students' motivation in learning English. Their application skills such as listening and speaking skills are improved evidently. A lot of students have won awards in the National and Shandong Higher Vocational Spoken English Competitions. And more and more students find ideal and satisfactory jobs after graduation. The reform has had a positive effect on the training of professional talents, and the quality of talents training has been improved.

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