
The Factors Resulted in Low Listening Grades for College Students and Our Solution

Xu Xiaochen, Ren Jingbo, Zhu Zhengtang, Zhuang Qingfa

Department of Basic, Shandong Electric Power College, Taian, 271000, China

***Corresponding Author:**

Xu Xiaochen

Email: 13583853180@163.com

Abstract: As English becomes more and more important in our life, the English listening ability is called upon to be higher and higher. Since the average level of college students' listening ability is low, we conduct a series of surveys to find out the reasons. Thus we find that too easy and boring listening practice in the textbooks, lower learning interest and motivation level as well as poor phonetic basis lead to the fact. At the same time, we find that the students are fond of English movies, which are said to be good teaching materials for English learners. So another survey which shows the likes and learning methods of the students towards English movies is done. All the data collected will help to lay foundation for further study.

Keywords: English movies; English listening ability; Listening practice; Motivation level of learning; English phonetics; Learning methods; Students of thermal power engineering.

INTRODUCTION

With the development of globalization and the wide application of the Internet, English plays a more and more important role in our daily life. Thus English learners have been asked to meet a higher standard, especially on listening ability. And the college English test, which is better known as CET, intended to examine the English proficiency of undergraduate and postgraduate students in China and ensure that Chinese undergraduates and postgraduates reach the required English levels is designed to have more listening sections. That means it will be more difficult for students to pass the test if they're bad at listening. However, during the teaching process at college, we find that the average listening ability for college students are rather weak compared with other English abilities. What are the reasons behind this fact?

Nowadays students can find abundant amount of English movies which are believed to be good teaching materials for English learners to improve their English ability [1, 2] on the Internet. According to our survey, almost 95% of the college students like English movies very much. What kind of English movies do they like to watch? Do they use it to improve their English abilities? How do they use the English movies to study English? How do they find English movies can help them with their English study? How can we teachers help to make good use of an English movie? These are other aspects we would like to find out.

METHODS

In order to figure out all the problems, we conduct a series of surveys by using questionnaires. There are open questions and closed questions on each questionnaire [3, 4]. We design several questions to test the students' study habits and motivation level as well as their use of the English movies in improving their English ability to lay foundation for further study.

Our survey give out 93 questionnaires to students of thermal power engineering from grade 2015 in our college and receive 92, among them 91 questionnaires are valid, and the valid rate is 98.91%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After we process the collected data based on computer, we summarize the reasons for poor listening ability as following:

First, 30% of the students are less interested in English study and have low motivation level of learning [5]. Some students take it for granted that their specialized courses are far more important than other courses and that leads to the fact that they do not pay enough attention to their English study. Also, some students have found out that English has “little” application in their daily life and perceive that as a reason not to take efforts [6].

Second, 48% of the students think that listening practice in college English textbook is rather easy in the content and too dull. Most of the listening materials are

read by the foreign experts instead of taken directly from original recorded materials, which are rather simple and can't interest the learners [7, 8].

Next, mastering of basic knowledge of English phonetics is not solid. Phonetics is the basis of pronunciation [9]. If the listener can't pronounce the words properly, they will naturally have much trouble in their listening [10]. Affected by the Chinese pronunciation, dialects and restriction of teachers' condition, some students cannot pronounce the vowels and consonants properly [11, 12], which leads to higher error rate in sound discrimination exercise. For example, we discover that in our daily teaching some students from Ji'ning and Heze district mispronounce [ʃ] in [s], and they make a voiceless [θ] sound resulted in the [s] and voiced [ð] in [d] because of a failure to put the tongue between the teeth. These students always have a hard time distinguishing the [ʃ], [s], [θ] and [ð] sound [13]. 60% of the students are not familiar to the rules of English pronunciation, and they are not skilled in using these skills like liaison, loss of explosion, and reduction, etc. Also, the difference between American and British English is new to some students. That's why even when they can understand a sentence in written form they find it difficult when listening to it [14, 15].

Finally, the limited vocabulary is another reason for low grade of 80% students. Also, both weak grammatical basis, and lack of knowledge about English-speaking countries add to the factors which prevent them for improving [16].

Accordingly, we find it a must to find a way to improve college students listening ability and teaching quality [17, 18]. And we have tried to apply the English movie clips which can create the needed cultural environment [19, 20] and filled with standard pronunciation and intonation and oral expressions [21-23] into our listening class in order to fulfill our goal. As to make our teaching experiment more targeted [24], we carry out another survey.

After counting up the survey results, we find that 58.24% of the students are all for introducing English movies into listening class [25, 26]; 41.75% approve of the method.

48.35% of the students surveyed favour classic feature movies [27]; 29.67% favour cartoon movies [28]; 12.08% favour science fiction movies [28, 29]. 63.74% of the students think feature movies can help them improve their English abilities [30, 31], which conforms with the Input Hypothesis that emphasizes on the importance of comprehensible input [32-34].

24.18% of the students surveyed agree that they should know the plot first, while 34% of them agree that they should know the background knowledge, and at the

same time 17.58% of them think they should learn the new words before watching the movie.

While watching, 78.02% of the students hope to have English and Chinese subtitles. As to the question "Which is the best way to improve listening ability after watching the movie?", 38.46% of the students surveyed think group discussion is the best way to improve listening ability after watching the English movie, while 14.29% think it should be perform, 26.37% think it should be dubbing, 13.19% think it should be dictation, and 7.69% think it should be comment.

CONCLUSION

In our teaching, we find out that average listening ability of college students is lower among all the English abilities and the reasons lie in the following aspects: 1. Some students are less interested in English study and have lower motivation level. 2. Listening practice in the textbook is simple and dull for college students which lacks of a flavor of life. 3. The basis of English phonetics is not solid.

As we would like to introduce English movies into listening class, we conduct another survey to test the students learning methods towards English movies. According to our survey, about 99% of the students like to have listening class based on English movies. All these preparation works can make our research more accurate and targeted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research leading to these results has received funding from Shandong Provincial Department of Education and Shandong Provincial Department of Finance (No. 2015238).

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