

AN EXAMINATION OF IMPROVING ORAL ENGLISH FOR COLLEGE
LEARNERS BY USING ORIGINAL ENGLISH FILMS

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been completed.

Abstract

A STUDY OF IMPROVING ORAL ENGLISH FOR COLLEGE LEARNERS BY USING ORIGINAL ENGLISH FILMS

Zhong Meihan (May)

Under the Supervision of Regina Pauly,

This paper concludes with recommendations for college English teachers in China. Because spoken English is so vital in learning a language, methods must be found to reach students using correct spoken English. I suggest that a heavy use of English and American films in the classroom would help solve this problem. This paper will examine past research of this issue, the relationship between oral English language and English films, and is there a specific type of film that is most suitable for teaching English language learners. The paper reviews motivation of learning oral English, and the benefits of using original English films in oral English teaching. This paper analyzes aspects of learning oral English, and contrasts two different ways of teaching oral English. In addition it presents a procedure of English learning through films. Lastly it offers suggestions of films, and how to choose English films for Chinese students.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that English is one of the world's most widely used languages. With the rapid development of China, the communication with foreigners is becoming more frequent. So, English, especially oral English plays an indispensable role in English learning. As oral English is the most important part in English learning, it is of great significance to find a method to improve oral English. Lack of English an environment is one of the difficulties in oral English for Chinese English learners (Liu&Zhang, 2006). However, original English films, as an integral part of audiovisual media, has many uses in language training and education (Locatis & Atkinson, 1984).

The method of using original English films to improve oral English is widely used in class or at other time as an informal teaching method. According to Zhu &Shi (2004), we all recognized that that English original films can not only help students be familiar with the Western cultures but also make the learner improve their listening and speaking abilities and learn a wide range of knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

1. What theory can support this topic?
2. Is there any relationship between oral English and English film?
3. How does one select a specific film type for teaching?
4. Is there any limitation of using English films to learn oral English?

Definition of Terms

Constructivism Learning Theory: The Constructivism Learning Theory, which was firstly posited by Lev Vygotsky, and enhanced by the other scholars, emphasizes the role of emotion and psychological atmosphere of learning environment in learning activities. Advocates of the theory believe in learning-centered thoughts in teaching, which exerts strong influence on instructional design. (Li, 2005)

Audio-Visual Instruction: The use of teaching materials and techniques that do not depend mainly upon the printed word to convey meaning. It is also known as instructional media and works through sight and sound.

EFL: Abbreviation for the term English as a Foreign Language

Delimitations of Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville online and the books borrowed from the library in South Central University of Nationalities. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC, Academic Search Premier, Wilson databases, Academic Search Elite, Google and Google Scholar, and Wilson as the primary sources. Key search topics included “English films”, “oral English”, “learning English”, “spoken language” and “EFL”.

Purpose of study

This method is the most widely used in the class or outside the class because it contains education in the amusement as an effective way. Therefore, I worked on this

topic because it is of great importance and because it is a good way to learn English in recreation. The greatest purpose of this study is to research the method in which to watch films to study oral English and provide college students a method to learn English more effectively.

Significance of the Study

English original films not only help students understand the Western cultures, and improve their listening and speaking abilities, but also make the learner expand knowledge ,improve their horizons and learn a wide range of knowledge. This study will let people know why it is important to learn oral English, how to improve oral English by utilizing original English films, and the benefits of this method to learn oral English.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As everyone knows, English has become more and more accepted as an international language. With the rapidly development of China, the communication with foreigners and businesses between countries is becoming more frequent. English, especially oral English, plays an indispensable role in daily life and international trade. However, traditional English teaching pays much more attention to grammar and sentence structures but overlooks oral English.

There is a phenomenon which is called “dumb English” existing in oral English learning. The students get high marks in English examinations, but they

can hardly speak English fluently nor have authentic pronunciation (Yao, 2008). As long as oral English is the most important part in English learning, it is of great significance to find a method to improve oral English. Films, as an integral part of audiovisual media, have many uses in language training and education (Locatis & Atkinson, 1984).

Motivation of Learning Spoken English

Zhou (2009) suggests that English teaching in many areas has been deeply influenced by the examination-oriented system for very long time. The teacher teach the rules of pronunciation and meaning of every word, then students take notes and remember it through dictations and examinations. It is just like pouring water into a container. Students study passively and then lose their motives and interest. An old proverb says interest is the best teacher to learn everything. If you are fond of spoken English, you will have the motivation to learn it well.

There are three things of great importance to successful learning: motivation, motivation and still motivation. And anyone can teach learners who want to learn, as Gardner, (2001).puts it, "Motivation is the feeling natured primarily by the classroom teacher in the learning situation" (p.121).The better atmosphere a class has, the more motivated students will be. The young students usually can reflect a positive response when watching the interesting film that they are interested in, for psychological reasons, it is the motivation that irritating bottomed on existing recognitive structures, arousing and sustaining sudents' curiosity. There is no doubt,

watching original English film is the good way to create study environment and arousing students' study motivation.

The aspects of learning the oral English

Gao (2010) found that the study of English requires two aspects; comprehensive ability and application ability. The ultimate target to improve the two abilities is to communicate with others. Hence, the purpose for English learning concentrates on training listening, reading and speaking. Good oral English should first be basically grammatically right, then demonstrate good pronunciation, and lastly, have fluent expression.

The foremost job to learning oral English is to have enough and correct knowledge of grammar. After you memorize it or understand it, the more important thing is keep the idea in your minds. Another basic thing in oral English learning is vocabulary. There are two to three thousands basic vocabulary words in daily English. Learning these words by hearts, will enhance the listening and comprehension ability. Here comes a truth: knowing only 10 words but master 100 ways of using the 10 words is much better than you know 100 words but only master 10 ways of using the 100 words.

Wang Yafang (2008) also notes that languages have their cultural background. When we start to learn a language, we must to understand its local culture, especially the difference between native culture and the foreign culture. Furthermore, Wang points out that pronunciation is the most important thing that

people notice about your English proficiency. Thus, it is of great significance to students to improve their English pronunciation.

Richard & Schmidt (2002) state that “EFL refers to English as a foreign language for learners who learn English in a formal classroom setting, with limited or no opportunities for use outside the classroom, in a country in which English does not play an important role in internal communication” (p.180). Yang (2010) found that EFL students often feel shy opening their mouth to speak oral English because they feel anxious that they will not be understood by others. It is of great importance that a student who is learning to speak English practice again and again. The more you practice, the more easily oral English will come to you.

Yang (2010) thought that language is an important part of culture. To some extent, the use of language is depended on culture. Each country has its own history, economy, religion and politics. Cultural differences influence language differences. According to the study of Yang, Jin (2009) considers that teachers cannot teach language without student’s knowledge of the culture of this language. Teachers should enrich students’ cultural awareness and stimulate students’ interest in oral English learning.

Traditional method and modern method of teaching oral English

Yan (2008) puts forward teacher-centered and exam-centered theory of traditional teaching method. For a long time, teachers were regarded as the leader during the English course. Teachers spoon-fed students the knowledge and in the

method to learn English they know. Thus, students are lacking the ability for independent thinking.

According to Yan (2008), exam-centered in junior and senior schools means all English teaching programs bring into practice according to the guidance of College Entrance Examination, which is called “Gao Kao” in China. And “Gao Kao” is regarded as a great event by people because they think it is supposed to decide the future of students. Just for this reason, many students become like test-machines who are good at examination but cannot speak fluent English even if they put a lot of time in learning English. Students open their mouth to utter some English sentence in order to pass the Spoken English Test during the College Entrance Examination.

There is a teaching method which is called Task-based Language Learning and Teaching Method. There are some theories basic to this method. When introducing a question “What is the group work or individual work in an extraordinary situation?” Ellis (1999) puts forward “assume of interaction and input”, asserting that the method is on the basis of analysis the activity, action and operations. The first level is activity which implies the context. The second level is purposeful action. The third level is operation, which represents how the thing is done. Yang (2010) raise that improve the ability of society language which includes reading ability, writing ability, and the ability of language tactic is the goal of Task-based learning and teaching. This method is an effective way to reform traditional ways. It provides a

greater chance, and gives courage to students to practice which can improve the comprehensive quality. A task-based learning and teaching method can activate the interest of students and can encourage them to solve the problem during the English learning.

Wang Yafang (2008) notes that group-work means students study in small groups and each group consist of three or four students. “Group work is very beneficial since the activity requires the contribution from more than two students”-(p.8).

Jin (2009) points out making use of films would be a good way to teach oral English. He puts forth interest as the final goal of using films to teach oral English. Nation (1990) notes that guessing from the context of films is “undoubtedly the most important vocabulary learning strategy” (p. 8). He thinks that unconscious vocabulary learning is a good way of English learning. Hu (2008) suggests that in listening to the dialogue and reading the captions of films, students meet the new words. On one hand, they can guess the meaning of these new words from the movie context. On the other hand, students will look up these words in the dictionary. In this way, they can add their vocabulary. In addition, “Retention is aided by exposing the students to the new words in audio and written forms simultaneously, because exposure to words in both media is more likely to result in their retention in memory” (p. 238).

The features of original English films

Sophie (2010) points out that many methods can improve students’ speaking and listening ability of English, however there are few methods that can be compared to

watching films. The main reasons are interests and attitudes are the best teachers to determine the level of English proficiency. An original film may stimulate interest because it presents real-life situations, real-life people and real-life language.

Gao (2010) suggests that original English films combine vision, audition and story elements to express meaning. The speaking speed in films is similar to how westerners speak in daily life, and the sentences used in the films are also used in daily English life. Through the combination of ordinary speech at ordinary speed, people can improve their speaking and listening abilities. Gao points out that films can also help students know the western life-style and westerners' way of thinking.

Choose what kinds of English films for students

New Oriental, an authoritative English training institutions in China, recommend 25 original English films to improve students' oral English. All these films include a plain language, but with the elegance and the peculiar sense of humor, and have interesting, clear beginnings, provocative, engaging content. Here are they:

Forrest Gump

Sea Biscuit

Liar Liar

You've Got Mail

Mona Lisa's Smile

About a Boy

The Family Man

Jerry Maguire

Alfie,

The Princess Diaries I & II

Remember the Titans

Patch Adams

The Runaway Bride

Coach Carter

Bicentennial Man

Father of the Bride

Life as a House

The Wedding Date

What Women Want

Big Daddy

Big Fish.

Arcario (1992) notes that comprehensibility is a major standard to select a film for students who want to improve their oral English. “It is important to choose scenes that balance dialogue with a high degree of visual support, appropriate speech delivery, clear picture and sound, and standard accent.” (p.109.) The use of original English films is also intended to arouse students’ interest and build up confidence in learning English. In general, when selecting a film to help students’ oral English, we must consider these factors: theme, accent, content and the length of a film.

Based on the theory of Arcario (1992), Zhu, H.C& Shi, H.C(2004) gives the further explanation. We should select the film with the theme of intensive readings. Such like campus life, study techniques, cultural difference, social problems, family and emotions, and etc. The content of films should be healthy with little profanity, sex and violence. The films chosen should have appropriate speech delivery, clear sound and standard accent. Films full of slang, jargons, local dialects or the actors speaking too fast should be avoid as much as possible.

The procedure of English learning through films

Golge (2008) divides the teaching procedure into seven steps: previewing activities, viewing the whole film, viewing sheets, vocabulary and pronunciation notebooks, film response journals, collaborative group work and role-play. He believes through these

steps students can improve their awareness about cultural issues and cross-cultural comparisons, speaking and listening skills and thinking skills. The method can make students understand and appreciate of life and arts, too.

Zhu (2004) puts forward that the activities of learning English are composed of three parts: previewing, viewing and post-viewing. The purpose of previewing is to let learners know some background, or a brief introduction, to the film. During the viewing activities, teachers can require that students take some notes of features of English used by the actors in some splendid plots. After viewing, students can be ask to retell that section of the film-or express their feelings after watching the film or asked to make a comment about it.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review of related literature shows that original English films are of great benefit to college English students. Sophie (2010)points out that many method can improve students' speaking and listening ability of English , there are few that can be compared to watch films. The one reason is interests and attitudes are the best teacher to determine the level of English proficiency. An original film may stimulate interest because it presents real-life situations, real-life people and real-life language. Gao (2010) suggests that original English films combine vision, audition and story elements to express meaning. The speaking speed in films is similar to westerners speak in daily life and the sentences they use in the films is also the daily English. Through the combination

people can improve the speaking and listening abilities. He points out that films can also help the students to know the western life-style and westerners' way of thinking.

The misunderstanding of English learning through films

To use films as great speaking practice, students should be sure to watch the whole film in small chunks and turn off the subtitles in their own language. It is of great importance to watch the film more than once and try to practice it by imitating the pronunciation. It is worth noting that students cannot reach good results if they watch the films while doing anything else. Instead, students should listen and watch the English films diligently and learn new vocabulary by heart.

(<http://www.english-listening-world.com/five-mistakes-watching-movies.html>).

Huang (2009) suggests that the oral English classes which blend in original English films is not like film appreciation classes. Teachers should not show a film without pauses and any other explanation. Films are used as another method of teaching English, not to teach the film.

Limitation of using original English films to study oral English in Chinese

Classroom.

Watching English films do not work very well due to students' different level of consciousness and learning ability. It is not always easy to grasp the method of learning oral English. Another problem is that Chinese education system is very different from Western education systems, which is a limitation of using original English films to study oral English.

Firstly, watching original English films come from the fact they are often an unrealistic portrayal of life. In other words, between films and life, there is a gap. For this reason, students cannot learn many daily life English words and sentence form films.

Secondly, students may be attracted by the plot of films so that they may neglect the purpose of study. Different students have different degree of self-awareness. If students pay more attention to films itself, they can not achieve the goals of learning oral English.

Thirdly, the language of original English films has the characteristics of randomness. Hwang (2000) point that "the language in the majority of current popular EFL authentic materials usually contains roughly 20% culture-specific expressions or concepts and can hence serve as smooth foray into the real English-speaking world".

Finally, Chinese English test CET-4 and CET-6 defeat the purpose of learning English for communicative purposes. Students may be concerned about exams as well and want their teachers to help them pass the tests. Some students think that watching films cost too much time, and it is almost a waste of times.

Conclusion

Original English films provide enjoyable oral English learning opportunities for students. If appropriate films are chosen, those which are purposeful to students' learning needs and proficiency level, students can benefit from films in various ways.

Though analyzing, we can draw a conclusion that it is feasible for college students to learn oral English via original English films. English films can provide Chinese college students an authentic language environment.

However, there are some limitations of using English films to learn oral English. But when students are under the guidance of teacher and stimulate involvement for making the most of learning opportunities of films, there is no doubt that original English films are the most enjoyable and valuable learning materials for Chinese college students.

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