

Thinking on Improving Presentation Teaching—Based on the Empirical Analysis of Presentation in College English Classes of Junior Non-English Majors in Universities of Science and Engineering

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Based on the empirical investigation of presentation in college English classes for junior non-English majors in science and engineering universities, the author explains her own thinking on how to improve presentation teaching from four aspects: setting teaching objectives, selecting teaching contents, using teaching methods, and evaluating and implementing methods.

Keywords: presentation, teaching objective, teaching content, teaching method, evaluation on implementation, thinking

Research Background

The Chinese English Proficiency Scale, recently released by the Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission, describes the oral expression ability of non-English major college students at the corresponding level, such as “being prepared to briefly express personal opinions on topics related to their major” and even “being able to express in-depth personal opinions on designated topics related to social culture and learning, and the expression should be rich in language, fluent in expression, and clear in thinking”.

Research Overview

Most of the existing researches regard presentation teaching as a modular unified teaching mode and explore its practice in different objects, namely language classes, without any research based on the learning subject, namely the specific teaching object. The author conducted a one-semester empirical investigation on 155 students in the lower grades of non-English majors in the University of Science and Technology where he taught. Based on students’ basic information, language self-assessment, presentation practice experience, and course expectation, this paper probes into students’ learning effect under the presentation teaching method, as well as the current situation and dilemma of the implementation of the teaching method. The research results show that it is generally the first time for students to contact the presentation teaching with oral practice as the main form, and the years of cramming teaching make students eager to get rid of dumb English and “improve their oral expression and communication skills”. After a semester of relevant study and practice, most students

believe that presentation teaching can achieve their course expectations, but there is a certain gap between it and the teacher's expectations and teaching goals. The author also sorted out the students' main problems and difficulties in the presentation practice in detail, as well as their feedback on the presentation teaching. Based on the above research results, she hereby makes the following reflections on how to improve presentation teaching.

Thinking

Setting of Teaching Goals

The survey results show that students' difficulties in presentation practice include their perceived emotional control, finding materials, organizing content, and enhancing interest. The unknowable problems also involve language expression, the use of body language, on-site interaction, PPT design, and other aspects. These problems are closely related to students' professional background, language ability, and practical experience. In the interview, most of the students said that they were "powerless" and "caring for one thing and losing the other". In a short period of time, it is not easy to go from having no experience in oral expression to completing the presentation involving all-round and comprehensive abilities freely. The author believes that the mastery of skills and the cultivation of abilities should follow the principle of step-by-step, and only with continuous investment can the results be achieved. According to the actual situation of the class taught by the author, presentation teaching should be arranged to be completed in two semesters step-by-step, and the teaching objectives should be set according to the cognitive law of "from easy to difficult, from concrete to abstract". The teaching goal of the first semester should focus on cultivating students' basic oral expression ability and building up their confidence, so that students can understand the basic skills and knowledge of presentation. The teaching in the second semester should focus on strengthening students' application and practice of the skills they have learned, and on this basis, cultivate students' ability to learn independently, solve practical problems, and think critically. The above objectives are also consistent with the curriculum objectives of Interactive and Comprehensive English.

Choice of Teaching Content

According to the adjustment of teaching objectives, the teaching content should be refined accordingly. In addition to introducing the basic framework and links of presentation, the teaching content of the first semester should also include basic oral training. Students' pronunciation and intonation should be corrected through classroom activities, such as picture-talking and oral retelling, so that students can build up confidence in "opening" and acquire basic oral expression ability. In the second semester, students' presentation practice should be the main focus. In terms of theme selection, the previous practice of limiting the theme to textbooks should be changed to respect students' personal interests and allow students to choose topics independently. On the one hand, it can prevent students from over-relying on the content of the textbook, reading from the textbook, and coping with problems; on the other hand, it can also protect students' learning enthusiasm, truly make students become the subject of learning, and give full play to the advantages of presentation teaching in cultivating students' ability to learn independently, solve practical problems, and think critically. In addition, students need to constantly revise their presentation skills in practice to become more proficient. Therefore, in the second semester of teaching, the evaluation of teachers and other students should also become an important part of the teaching content.

Use of Teaching Methods

Presentation teaching takes oral practice as its main form and involves the cultivation of students' comprehensive abilities in various aspects. Therefore, the teaching methods should be diversified, which is also the setting of teaching principles discussed above and the selection of teaching content. As for the teaching method, the author mainly has the following three thoughts:

A combination of interpretive teaching, demonstration teaching, and practical teaching. Interpretive teaching can be used to teach the basic skill and knowledge of presentation in the first semester, which is mainly taught by the teacher. In the part of demonstration-type teaching, teachers can demonstrate in person, play excellent video examples, and invite outstanding students to present in class, and videotape the presentation of students and ask them to review it later, so that students can deepen their understanding and mastery of presentation skills. Practical teaching allows students to internalize the “knowledge” they have learned into “ability” in the process of “doing”. The organic combination of the three ensures the effective realization of the teaching goal of presentation.

Introduction of group cooperation. In the author's interviews with students, she learned that students want to progress their learning process “step-by-step”. Most students have zero experience in presentation practice or even oral expression, which makes the tension and fear become the biggest difficulty they perceive. Group cooperation can help students reduce their learning anxiety, overcome their nervousness and fear, and gain buffer and adaptation time for individual presentation. In addition, this way can also cultivate students' concept of cooperation and communication skills. The group members learn from each other and exchange what they have. The cooperative atmosphere makes presentation practice no longer a burden of study, but an interesting challenge, which helps to improve students' enthusiasm and cultivate their ability to overcome difficulties and solve practical problems. However, the teacher should pay attention to the division of labor among the group members and supervise whether all the group members participate in the activity effectively.

Application of the whole group participation mode. During the classroom observation, the author found that due to the lack of novelty in the content, non-standard intonation, irregular expression, or lack of interaction, some students' presentation became a veritable “one-man show”. In the long run, students lose their enthusiasm for learning day-by-day, and presentation teaching is easy to become a mere formality. Therefore, in addition to incorporating “interaction” into the presentation evaluation system, the audience's attention and feedback should also be regarded as an important part of the audience's own classroom performance. For example, in class, the “audience” should listen carefully and complete the note-taking of the presentation, and hand it in as homework to be included in the regular grade. The “audience's” questions and comments will also be counted as the class performance score. The attention from the “audience” is more conducive to the students on the stage to practice and strengthen the learning effect. The students sitting below also consciously observe and monitor the presentation of others, reflect on themselves, and check the gaps and fill in the gaps.

Evaluation of the Implementation

The survey results show that most students can benefit from the teacher's evaluation, and some students mentioned in the interview that the teacher's classroom evaluation has a certain repeatability. Due to the limited time in class, teachers' evaluations sometimes fail to cover all aspects and lack effective evaluations. Therefore, in the evaluation of student presentation, teacher evaluation, and peer-grading can be combined in form. In terms of content, the teacher evaluation mainly aims at students' outstanding problems in practice and puts forward

suggestions, while the peer evaluation involves more comprehensive contents, including six aspects: structure, content, language, body language, PPT, and interaction. The evaluation is completed in the form of written quantitative grading and submitted. Peer-evaluation is an effective supplement to the teacher's oral evaluation. It also enables the students who make the presentation practice to understand their own shortcomings more directly. The students who participate in the evaluation can also improve their self-awareness and become better learners. In addition, teacher evaluation should pay attention to positive reinforcement and adopt more positive encouraging language.

Conclusion

Based on the previous empirical investigation, in order to improve presentation teaching, it is necessary to further clarify and optimize the presentation-teaching goal, teaching content, teaching methods, and evaluation implementation. In terms of teaching objectives, students should be able to understand the basic knowledge step-by-step, acquire the basic oral expression ability, and apply and practice the skills they have learned in two semesters. The teaching content is also arranged from simple and specific skills explanation and basic oral training to complex and abstract skills practice, independent learning, and critical thinking ability cultivation. The teaching method adopts the combination of interpretive teaching, demonstration teaching, and practical teaching, and introduces the form of group cooperation and the mode of whole participation. In terms of evaluation, teacher evaluation and peer evaluation complement each other, which really brings into play the promotion role of evaluation to teaching.

Due to the limited space, it is difficult to cover all the above thoughts. In teaching practice, teachers still need to further understand the essence from the surface phenomenon, so as to form a more systematic and comprehensive understanding of improving the presentation teaching of College English classes for junior non-English majors in universities of science and engineering.

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