

Listening Training for Non-English Major Students

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English listening comprehension is quite important for the non-English major students. We cannot provide the students with enough listening training in class since time is limited. We can offer them useful materials as after-class practice. The students should make full use of their textbooks first, and try to listen to some short stories and conversations in their studying groups. We can also help them search for English news, songs, and movies, and some English listening materials on the Internet to improve their listening comprehension.

Keywords: listening comprehension, non-English major, materials, training

Introduction

It is very important for Chinese students to practise their ability of English listening comprehension, especially for non-English major students, because the non-English major students cannot get much access to English materials as those English majors, and there is too much distraction in and out of college nowadays. The students must focus on their own specialities first, while their time is limited, and they just cannot spare too much time on English studying. Most of the colleges have long neglected the training of listening, speaking, and translating in their English teaching (Qi & Sun, 2012). When they take CET-4 and CET-6, the non-English major students generally consider the listening comprehension is rather difficult, and it is not easy to improve their performance in listening comprehension (Qiao, 1995). To improve the English listening ability of the non-English major students, it is necessary for the teachers to design some workable and practical listening strategies for the non-English major students. First, we can provide the students with some suitable listening materials. The normal resources are English textbooks, short stories and conversations, English news items, English songs and movies, and some English studying Apps. Since the students can get access to the Internet easily, we may also introduce some English studying websites as well. Actually, young people are easily affected by each other, so it is a good idea to put the students into groups and encourage them to study and practise together for certain assignments, so that they may help each other in listening practice, and build up good studying habits at the same time.

Textbooks

Most of the college English textbooks provide the students with enough listening materials. But the non-English major students are quite different from each other in English listening ability. Some may find the listening materials in the textbooks too easy and they do not want to waste their time, while others may feel those materials too difficult and they just cannot finish the assignments on their own. Thus, the teachers have to make flexible assignments. We can choose some materials from the textbooks as basic practice, and all the students should finish the basic practice on their own, while the other materials may be taken as optional assignments. The

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students should choose some from the optional assignments and finish these assignments either on their own or with their classmates in some English studying groups. Studying together in groups will help the students improve both their English listening ability and studying habits. The students can learn from each other and find out the most suitable studying strategies, and build up confidence in helping others. The most important thing should be the assignments. The teacher must study the students in different studying groups carefully, and make out different assignments for each group.

Short Stories and Conversations

To improve their listening ability more efficiently, the students need more listening practice out of class. Since the non-English major students have their own specialities, and cannot spare too much time on English, especially English listening practice, suitable short stories and conversations can be good supplements for their in-class listening practice. We can collect some interesting English classical stories and conversations, and ask the students to listen to them as their homework. If some stories appear to be a little bit too difficult, we can design some easy questions after the stories. If the students feel the stories or the conversations are fairly easy to understand, we just ask them to retell the stories or repeat the conversations in pairs in their own words. This repetition can take place in their own studying groups, because the group members are familiar with each other, and thus they may not be too nervous or too shy to speak English in public. We can also ask the students to share their own favourite English stories in groups or in class. One student plays the recording of his story, and then asks one of his classmates to retell the story in his own words. The feeling like a teacher may well arouse the students' interest, and may attract more students to drop in such practice. Interest works as the best teacher and pushes the students forward with ease. Sometimes, if we can find some foreign student whose native language is English, we can invite him to the class and ask our Chinese students to make short conversations with him. The actual use of English with native speaker will greatly arouse the students' interest in the language.

News Items

Most students are very interested in the world out of campus, but almost all of their studying tasks focus on their textbooks and courses on campus. So, the news and hot spots serve as very good materials for listening practice. It is very convenient for the students to listen to some English news both on TV and on the radio nowadays. We can introduce some common news resources to the students, such as some famous English news programs of some radio stations and TV stations. The words and grammar of the news reports have their own special features. Normally, they tend to use some short words in the English broadcast news instead of long words (Tian & Yan, 2012). There are more proper terms, abbreviations, and new words in the news reports. In order to make the news freshly and vividly, the reporters always use the simple present tense, the present continuous tense, and the present perfect tense instead of the past tenses, so that the audience may feel the events are developing now (Tian & Yan, 2012). We cannot include the news items in English classes since the class time is limited. But the students can listen to certain amount of time of the English news every day as part of their assignments, and hand in their comments on the news items every week. It may not only help with their listening comprehension, but help improve their writing ability as well. Occasionally, if we can spare several minutes before class, we may ask the students to do some news report or weather report in front of the class according to the information they have gotten from the radio or TV stations. Such kind of presentation can test whether the students have understood the news correctly, and can also improve their ability of speaking English in public. The teachers should protect the students' confidence and enthusiasm, and be cautious about correcting their pronunciation. If some students

are too shy to speak in public, we just ask them to do the news report in their own studying groups. The teachers should also be cautious about the news resources. We'd better focus on some positive influence in picking news resources for the students.

English Songs and Movies

As young people, many students love songs and movies. They are usually interested in English movies with various language materials, but they are scared by the deep cultural background and social information, the fast and smooth conversations, and the informal expressions that are quite different from the written English grammar in the movies (Wu, 2002). Many colleges now provide the non-English major students with optional courses of English film appreciation. Such courses are welcome among the students, because they display the direct native usage of English in a relaxed and pleasant way. However, the non-English major students lack the understanding of English, the American and British literatures, and the background of social culture. So, most of the students can only understand the story of the English movie (Liu & Wang, 2008). As a means of entertainment, English movies offer a good opportunity of studying English through mere enjoyment (Shi & Zhang, 2010). So, English songs and movies are good resources of English listening training. The teacher can give the students some advice on how to improve their vocabulary, and help them understand the difference between the formal written English and the informal oral expressions. We can also introduce some background of the English culture and society. So that they can enlarge their vocabulary and get to know more about English culture while improving their listening ability. Thus, it is advisable to introduce some English songs and movies to the students. We can ask the students to give a brief introduction to the movie, or repeat some parts of the movie or the song. So, they can practise both listening and spoken English, and enjoy the song or the movie at the same time. That will help make studying English more interesting, too. Since we always focus on the written English, most students are more familiar with formal written language. They know little about the informal oral English. When we listen to the English songs or watch the English movies, we come across much informal spoken English instead of formal written English. So, the students can also learn such oral expressions of English through songs and movies.

English Studying Websites

Most of the time, the students can get access to the Internet very conveniently on campus. They can search for information, news, watch movies, listen to music, make contact with their friends, and study on their own with the help of the Internet. But there is also much useless or even fake information on the Internet. Sometimes, the students are too young and inexperienced to make clear whether the materials they get from the Internet are true or not. To avoid them being cheated or misled by some wrong information, we must study the English studying websites and choose some helpful ones to introduce to the students. These selected websites can serve as a perfect supplement for the English class. The listening materials on the Internet can well help the students since we cannot include too much listening practice in class. We can ask the students to share with their classmates about their favourite English studying websites, and introduce some more self-studying information if there is any. Since they must practise English listening after class, the more English materials they get, the better. But we must keep in mind that things change quickly on the Internet, and we must change our information about the English studying websites accordingly. So that we can provide the students with the newest information about the websites.

English Studying Apps

We are used to dealing with almost everything through our smart phones nowadays, and are familiar with more and more Apps on the smart phones. This can also provide a pretty convenient English listening practice

resource. The students can easily accept the English studying Apps since they are interested in the smart phones and the Internet. We may study some popular English studying Apps and pick some appropriate ones for the students. There are plenty of listening materials on those Apps, and the students can get access to the listening materials anywhere since they bring their mobile phones with them everywhere. Once, they build up the habit of studying English with the help of these Apps, they will listen to English everywhere and improve their listening comprehension greatly. We can also spare some time for them to share their favourite English studying Apps in class, or share with their classmates about how to use these Apps more efficiently.

Conclusion

English listening comprehension is very important. We should put great emphasis on listening prior to all the other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing. The non-English major students may come across more difficulties in studying because of their English standard and limited studying time. To help the students improve their English listening ability, we have to make full use of their textbooks, and search for more materials on TV and the radio. At this Internet Age, we may also turn to the Internet and the smart phones. With the help of the English studying websites and the studying Apps, we can push the students to build up good studying habits and listen to English whenever they have spare time. Meanwhile, we can put them into groups to study together and help each other. They may communicate with each other about English studying resources and learn from each other. The teachers also offer them more materials, and thus they can improve their English listening ability quickly.

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