Development and Construction of College Spoken English Course under Multi-modal Theory

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Abstract: Multi-modal teaching theory is one of the hot topics in linguistics. With the widespread use of information technology, multi-modal interactive teaching has gained a more favorable foundation and conditions. College English teachers, through the analysis of teaching materials and students' learning situations, select and actively apply various modes in oral English teaching, realizing the construction of on-line spoken language classrooms featured in multi-modal interaction. This approach can enhance students' classroom participation, stimulate their interest in learning, and improve the effectiveness of oral English teaching. This article elucidates the theory of multi-modal teaching and the feasibility in its using in college oral English teaching, analyzes the current situation of college spoken English teaching, and explores the teaching strategies that can be used in college spoken English course under multi-modal theory.

1. Introduction

The current pure offline lecture-style spoken language teaching mode cannot meet the learning needs of college students. Coupled with the influence of language environment, many students often suffer from low self-efficacy and unsatisfactory results in spoken English learning. However, the requirements for English proficiency in social interactions and work world, especially in the ability to communicate in both oral and writing forms, are increasingly high. In this context, college spoken English teaching is inevitably moving towards the combination of multiple modes and symbols, which can truly enhance students' oral proficiency and their social and professional effectiveness.[1]

2. Explanation of Multi-modal Teaching Theory

Modality refers to the ways in which individuals interact with the external environment using their senses. Multi-modes refers to the use of three or more senses to interact. As a teaching theory, multi-modal teaching involves utilizing various senses, such as auditory, visual, and tactile, as well as diverse means and symbols like language, sound, images etc.[2] to engage students' multiple senses in a coordinated manner. Multi-modal teaching incorporates different media, including static and dynamic resources, into the teaching process, providing students with a multi-sensory and comprehensive learning experience. In the context of spoken English teaching, students receive input through visual and auditory modes, and then produce knowledge through the spoken language modality. They simultaneously receive text, sound, and images, activating their multiple senses and

actively participating in language learning activities. This approach improves the often monotonous and dull atmosphere of traditional classroom content. Meanwhile, incorporating multi-modes into students' learning potential during the teaching process transforms multi-modal concepts into abilities that assist communication in spoken language production, thereby synchronously enhancing students' oral proficiency and social and professional effectiveness. Spoken English teaching can fully demonstrate the cooperation, coordination, and interchangeability among various modalities, contributing to the construction of students' communicative competence.[3]

3. Feasibility Analysis of Applying Multi-modal Theory in College Spoken English Teaching

Multi-modal spoken language teaching can utilize various teaching modes such as auditory, visual, and tactile to stimulate students' learning awareness. For example, the words with striking colors will capture students' attention. Images and animations can evoke students' visual perception of graphics and imagery, promoting their understanding of difficult concepts. When multi-modes applied and text, sound, and images are combined together, students' cognitive burden could be largely reduced, thus can enhance the durability of their learning and yield better learning outcomes. Moreover, with muti-modes, a favorable English learning environment can be created where interactions between individuals and external environments, including human-to-human and human-to-machine interactions can be achieved, and students could explore and learn language in a more realistic communicative way with the help of digital and three-dimensional learning mode. Under such circumstances, different modalities could cooperate and promote each other harmoniously thus to jointly accomplish the oral communication tasks. Additionally, in the process of multi-modal college spoken English teaching, students' classroom participation is greatly stimulated, and their proactive attitude towards English learning is enhanced. Furthermore, the student's position as the protagonist in the classroom is highlighted in a multi-modal English spoken language teaching mode, increasing their motivation to learn actively. As the main body of class teaching, students can personalize learning content and further integrate themselves with the text world, thereby successfully mastering the relevant learning materials and greatly improving their oral proficiency and language proficiency.[4]

4. Analysis of the Current Situation of College Spoken English Teaching

4.1. Lack of Continuity between Classroom and Extracurricular Activities

To improve oral proficiency, students often need repetitive and prolonged practice. However, most universities have relatively low class frequencies, limiting English teachers to teach and train students' language skills within limited classroom time, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching outcomes. Furthermore, oral language teaching is not independent, and the time allocated for oral language instruction cannot be effectively guaranteed. Moreover, students' different and uneven English proficiency levels make it more difficult for English teachers to assess and provide effective feedback to each student's oral training within the limited class time. After class, most students cannot ensure the effectiveness of self-directed oral practice, leading to a lack of continuity between classroom and extracurricular activities. However, the application of multi-modal teaching can overcome and compensate for these deficiencies by effectively connecting in-class and out-class oral training activities.

4.2. Limited Variety in Teaching Content

With the advent of the internet age, there is an abundance of resources available for spoken English

learning. However, in actual oral language teaching, these diverse resources often struggle to be integrated into the curriculum, and textbooks remain the main source of traditional course materials. While textbooks generally include a comprehensive knowledge and skill system, they have limited capacity. Additionally, the limitation of paper-based media is one of the challenges. When students learn from textbooks, they only obtain abstract language symbols detached from language using environments. In unpredictable real-life communication activities, students often find it difficult to successfully complete corresponding communicative tasks.[5]

4.3. Incomprehensive Evaluation System

Constrained by teaching resources and class hours, college spoken English teaching commonly exhibits a single evaluation mechanism. Firstly, the evaluation methods are often limited. Although formative assessment is encouraged in current teaching, due to the unique nature of oral language teaching, summative evaluation still dominates the evaluation process, overlooking dynamic assessments of students' oral language learning progress. Secondly, the existing evaluation mainly involves teachers as the sole evaluators. Students' evaluation results are often heavily influenced by teachers' subjective factors. Furthermore, there is a lack of diverse evaluation criteria. In current spoken English teaching evaluations, the standards predominantly focus on language itself and fail to incorporate social and communicative effectiveness. As a result, the final evaluation results are often one-sided, detached from the actual language environment.[6]

5. Exploration of Strategies for College Spoken English Teaching under Multi-modal Theory

5.1. Transform Teaching Philosophies

In organizing and implementing oral language teaching, English teachers' language output directly or indirectly influences students' language input. Spoken English teaching mainly relies on the auditory modality, with students primarily receiving the teacher's speech. Therefore, English teachers need to enhance their own English language proficiency, including proper pronunciation, intonation, volume, and speed. Additionally, English teachers should incorporate visual modes by proper using gestures, facial expressions, and body languages to complement and reinforce their speech. Furthermore, teachers should make effective use of multimedia devices, collect and select suitable teaching materials, ensuring high relevance between images, videos, and the teaching content. The audio in multimedia materials should have authentic intonation, appropriate speed, and other qualities.[7] Moreover, teachers should allocate appropriate time proportions for students' input and oral practice, providing increased time for students' oral practice. College English teachers need to change their teaching philosophies and enable students to participate in more practical activities such as debates and speeches, gradually breaking free from the role of passive recipients. It is essential to prioritize the development of students' multi-modal communicative competence while focusing on oral proficiency.

5.2. Incorporate Fragmented Learning into the Multi-modal System

Although the multi-modal approach partially solves the limitation of class hours, there are still challenges regarding limited teaching content and insufficient teaching time. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate fragmented learning into the multi-modal teaching system. Through short videos, animations, brief texts, and small games, teachers can divide and deliver supplementary and challenging content in a concise and practical manner. This approach takes advantage of the short and refined nature of fragmented learning, benefiting students' vocabulary acquisition, language

expression, and language points. Such a combination of multi-modal teaching and fragmented learning not only significantly improves learning efficiency but also fosters students' self-directed learning abilities.

5.3. Infiltrate Culture through Various Modalities

Language learning can not be separated from learning its associated culture, which is deeply rooted in the language itself. Therefore, English teachers need to use multi-modal teaching methods to effectively integrate cultural connotations with language learning. To achieve this, teachers should optimize and integrate resources when selecting teaching content and constructing modes. They should not only pay attention to develop students' oral proficiency but also to enhance their cultural awareness through oral practices.

Various approaches can be adopted, such as incorporating influential literary works into spoken language teaching through drama performances, or introducing famous artworks combined with simulated scenarios to help students to think and enhance their oral expression skills. During these activities, teachers can participate as audience, providing their own opinions and suggestions after students' performances. Furthermore, they can encourage and instruct students' discussions, realizing peer evaluation. Authentic language environments enable students to break free from their native language thinking patterns, effectively engaging their senses and brains in comprehensive responses to language information, thereby naturally absorbing the language. With the combination of visual and auditory modalities, students can gain a comprehensive experience, better comprehend the cultural implications, and further enhance their multi-modal communicative competence.

5.4. Optimize the Evaluation and Feedback Mechanism

In the past, the evaluation and feedback process in college spoken English teaching relied mostly on limited forms of interaction, such as questioning and answering.

Under the guidance of multi-modal theory, English teachers can apply multi-modal teaching methods and leverage internet resources to facilitate convenient, objective, and effective evaluation and feedback. In classroom teaching and student' production part, mobile phones, recording devices, and language labs can be used to record or videotape the teaching process and students' own performances, enabling self-learning and self-evaluation after class. Moreover, teachers can make full use of online learning platforms such as learning apps and virtual classrooms to enhance communication channels between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. With these approaches, English teachers can monitor students' learning progress anytime and anywhere and timely feedback on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation, facial expressions, etc can be given to the students. This allows students to gain a comprehensive understanding of their learning outcomes and language proficiency, facilitating targeted improvement. In the multi-modal spoken language teaching, dynamic interaction between teachers and students is greatly enhanced, optimizing the evaluation and feedback mechanism, and leading to further improvement in students' oral proficiency and teaching effectiveness.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the effective and proper use of multiple modalities can promote positive teaching outcomes, while neglecting its appropriate application may lead to negative effects. Therefore, when selecting and combining modes, college English teachers should make rational use of multi-modal elements from practical perspectives. Additionally, when constructing a multi-modal oral language classroom, teachers should prioritize teaching content and selectively choose relevant materials to

avoid overshadowing the main focus. Otherwise, an excessive amount of multimedia information in the oral language class may distract students' attention and hinder the effectiveness of teaching.

Acknowledgement

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