

The Phonetics Perspective of Oral English Teaching Strategies in Higher Vocational Colleges

Chou Fei

Xi'an Aeronautical Polytechnic Institute, Xi'an 710089

Keywords: higher vocational colleges; English; spoken English; phonetics

Abstract: The current wave of globalization and internationalization is in full swing. Every country has frequent exchanges, whether at the economic, academic or cultural level. However, in the process of communication, the language of each country is different, which brings certain obstacles to communications and interactions. Therefore, as English is the most widely used international 'lingua franca' in the world, its importance is self-evident. For communication, learning oral English is crucial. As Higher Vocational Colleges, with the core goal of cultivating professional, applied talents, the end goal of oral English teaching is to provide society and enterprises, with professional English-speaking talents, and to provide services in spoken English. Hence, the quality of oral English teaching in higher vocational colleges is linked to the cultivation of relevant professional talents, and it is worth investing a lot of teaching resources. This paper analyzes the current problems of oral English teaching in vocational colleges, and from the perspective of phonetics, attempts to provide some strategies and measures to improve oral English teaching standards in vocational colleges.

1. Introduction

One of the current trends in society is internationalization and globalization. The continuous development in the field of communications, transportation and other industries has created convenient conditions for the flow of people around the world, and international cooperation and exchanges. As such cooperation and exchanges between countries are happening in the fields of culture, economy, politics and technology, aspect of language exchange becomes particularly important, and as an international language, English plays an important role.

Different from ordinary colleges and universities, higher vocational colleges are designed to cultivate application-oriented talents, with skills suited for practical work. English teaching in ordinary colleges and universities, though it also pays attention to oral training, puts more emphasis on the theoretical knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar and so on. English teaching in higher vocational colleges, on the other hand, focuses on the practicality. Therefore, oral English training is largely emphasized.

However, there are many problems within the oral English teaching in higher vocational colleges, and we need to make corresponding improvements. English, as a language, the essence of its spoken form remains to be human voices and sounds. Hence, the introduction of phonetics, the study focusing on human voice, may be beneficial towards improving oral English teaching.

2. The Current Situation of Oral English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

2.1 The lack of good language environment

For English learning, especially oral English learning, it is recognized that the most effective and convenient way is to live for some time, in a country where English is a native language. Therefore, the most important thing to learn a language is the establishment of a language environment. If there is an immersive language environment in which students are located, then it is natural to be influenced by such language. However, due to the long-standing influence of exam-oriented education, whether it is an ordinary college or a higher vocational college, the teaching of English puts too much emphasis on the theoretical knowledge. Teachers invest a lot of energy in teaching vocabulary, explaining grammar and summary of some typical sentence patterns. Even in oral English courses which should be focusing on practical training, the teacher still only follows the script, and the content still consists of studying new words, typical sentence patterns, with some pronunciation learning added, during which the text will be read several times. At most, the teachers will group up the students, to carry out some dialogue exercises of the text. This method neglects the fact that English not only needs to be understood and written, but more importantly, it must be spoken. Teachers not paying attention to the creation of good English environment, directly leads to students learning 'mute English'. [1]

2.2 Insufficient professionalism among teachers

Another problem in current oral English teaching is the lack of professionalism among teachers [2]. For the practice-oriented oral English teaching, the role of teachers is especially important. Oral English teachers are not only responsible for the correct pronunciation of new words or teaching daily spoken terms, more importantly they need to create an oral training atmosphere and master the oral training process. By creating a vivid and lively oral training environment, teachers can effectively stimulate students' interest and desire to speak, consequently improve the oral training effectiveness. Therefore, the level of professionalism of teachers can directly affect the quality of oral English teaching.

However, the current situation is that, professionalism among higher vocational college teachers is insufficient. One of the reasons for this problem is the consensus that, in general, higher vocational education in our country is not as good, as the so called 'ordinary higher education institutions'. This misconception has led most teachers to prefer 'ordinary' colleges and universities, and few excellent teachers will willingly pick higher vocational colleges. Another reason is that, the occupational ethics of oral teaching teachers in higher vocational colleges is not high, as they pay too much attention to personal gains and losses, and do not do their best to prepare for and carry out oral English teaching. Due to these reasons, teachers cannot effectively create a good language environment required for students to speak English, their teaching methods also cannot inspire the enthusiasm of students, thus the oral English teaching quality suffers.

2.3 Students' weak foundation and lack of confidence

There is also a major problem of weak foundation of students [3]. On the one hand, many students are not interested in learning and are not willing to learn, on the other hand, some students have a good attitude, but their English foundation is too weak, they achieve little. These students have worked hard and are not getting the rewards they deserve, over time, they will inevitably lose the motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

In general, students in higher vocational colleges have the following problems in oral English

learning. One is that their vocabulary is not wide enough. Without enough vocabulary, it is bound to be extremely difficult to express what you think through spoken language. Another problem is that students lack self-confidence and dare not to speak. This is a common problem in oral English teaching. At the root of it, students think they have poor oral English skills, and they are afraid of making mistakes and embarrass themselves, which makes them instinctively not wanting to speak. Other problems in oral English learning include poor pronunciation, nonauthentic usage of phrases, ‘Chinese style’ English. To sum up, main problem in oral English teaching in higher vocational colleges, is that the foundation of students is weak, which leads to the inability to keep up with the normal progress of oral English teaching, thus affecting the quality of oral English teaching.

3. Oral English Teaching Strategies in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Phonetics

3.1 Create a good atmosphere and focus on students' daily oral practice

In view of the problems existing in the current oral English teaching in higher vocational colleges, we can carry out targeted improvement from the perspective of phonetics. First, according to the general learning curve of human language, to master a language, the most important thing is to practice more. Therefore, schools and teachers should emphasize students' daily oral practice. To better stimulate the motivation and desire of students to speak, teachers should create a good, lively and open English environment in the classroom and in life [4].

As why students dare not to speak, there are two main reasons. One is because there is no environment that guides them to speak. They are embarrassed to speak English. Therefore, we try to create an open and free English environment. Another reason is that they have generally poor English language skills, they cannot express their thoughts fluently. In this regard, teachers are required to ease them into speaking through some teaching methods. For example, in the classroom, teachers should focus on using simple vocabulary and a single short sentence to ensure that students can understand what you mean. Furthermore, the teacher can send out some regular expressions of spoken language and the sentence patterns, vocabulary and collocations that are expected to appear in the classroom to the students in advance, so that they can be used without difficulties. In addition, when the students' oral English ability is considered adequate, teachers can organize some speeches, performances and other activities to enrich their learning process and further stimulate their interest in oral English learning.

3.2 Improve the professionalism of teachers and enhance teaching methods

Since the professionalism of oral teachers in higher vocational colleges is not high enough to fully meet the needs of oral English teaching, on the one hand, schools should make more investment and attract higher-level professional teachers through higher offerings. The school also needs to carry out regular training activities for the current professional teachers. The teachers themselves should also develop the habit of self-learning and self-improvement, and constantly strengthen their own understanding and professionalism.

By these methods, the professionalism of teachers may be effectively improved. As teachers' professionalism improves, naturally they will be able to carry out more suited and efficient oral English teaching. For example, teachers' professionalism improves, and they have a deeper understanding of phonetics, now they can teach students' oral pronunciation better, and can now better guide students how to use the correct mouth shape, tongue position, etc., to speak authentic English. Another example is that they can now utilize more teaching methods such as ‘contrast’, ‘oral positioning’ and ‘gestures’, making the teaching process more fun [5].

3.3 Conduct student-oriented and encouragement-based teaching, and enhance students' interest and confidence in learning

In the teaching process, we must fully recognize the uniqueness of each student. Differences between different students will inevitably require teaching to be different. Some students have a good foundation and a strong learning ability. In this case, in addition to regular oral teaching, teachers can arrange some open-ended, deeper-diving oral learning tasks to maintain their interest and motivation. For students with weak foundations, it is necessary to further refine the regular teaching process, so that they can successfully accept the teaching. More, in the teaching process, we must fully use the encouragement-based teaching method. Through concrete and sincere encouragement and praise, students can be confident and effectively self-motivated.

4. Summary

Society will be further globalized and internationalized. Therefore, cultivating a group of English-speaking application-oriented talents with high professionalism is one of the important goals of higher vocational colleges. Due to various practical factors, oral English teaching in higher vocational colleges still faces problems such as lack of proper atmosphere, low professionalism of teachers and weak foundation of students. Therefore, it is necessary to start improving from the prospective of phonetics, creating a good atmosphere and emphasizing daily oral training, improve the professionalism of teachers and cultivate students' confidence and interest in learning, so as to improve the quality and effectiveness of oral English teaching.

References

- [1] Zhou Wei Yu Spoken English for Higher Vocational Students Learning of teaching strategy [J] Science and Education Wenhui (Xunkan on), 2015 (03): 170-171.
- [2] Chen Yue. Research on the Teaching Strategies of Oral English Class in Higher Vocational Colleges [J]. Contemporary Teaching Research Series, 2017(12):5-6.
- [3] Wang Jiqiu Spoken English Teaching Strategies to explore innovative vocational colleges [J] Hebei Vocational Education, 2018,2 (04): 29-31.
- [4] Research at Xing perspective phonetics Vocational College Oral English teaching strategies [J] Jiamusi Vocational College, 2018 (02): 344 + 346.
- [5] Cai Cong Yao Research Perspective phonetics Vocational College Oral English teaching strategies [J] English Square, 2019 (04): 107-108.