

A Research on Using English Movies to Improve Chinese College Students' Oral English

Xianghui Li

Hebei Finance College, Baoding City, China

Peng Wang

Hebei Finance College, Baoding City, China

Abstract—The current English teaching can not meet the needs of the Chinese students to quickly improve their ability of English speaking, the use of English movie teaching model shows its unique advantages in this field. Based on the study of language input hypothesis, output Hypothesis and language social communication theory, the author puts English movie into the English teaching activities. By using movies in the English class, Chinese college students can improve their listening and speaking skills, they can enlarge their vocabulary knowledge and they can even make their pronunciation and intonation better.

Index Terms—English movie teaching, oral English training, teaching tips

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the deepening development of college English teaching, traditional teaching methods cannot satisfy the demand of the present English teaching. To reform the traditional teaching methods, namely, emphasis on language teaching, grammar, vocabulary, using modern means of teaching and cultivating students' English application ability has become a new trend of college English teaching reformation. Language learning is different from the learning of other subjects, it has a strong practical feature and it depends on the learning materials and learning atmosphere greatly, it is in need of more situational learning. At present, the biggest problem for English learners is the lack of authentic English language environment. What they have gotten is the abstract language knowledge, not for actually communication, which has caused the imbalance of language input and output.

Speaking, undoubtedly becomes the most important factor to Chinese College students who learn English as a foreign language. Krashen (S Krashen, 1985) puts forward the "input hypothesis" theory in his second language acquisition theory. Krashen (S Krashen, 1985) points out that the formation of acquisition is on the basis of Comprehensible Input, and the input has been able to be understood by the help of a Context. Swain (Swain, 1995) proposed the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis. He points out that although the comprehensible input in language learning is essential, but it is not the only means the students need. She thinks that in second language acquisition, if the learners only rely on language comprehensible input which couldn't ensure they can speak accurately and fluently in communication. So they also need the comprehensible output. MacWhinney (MacWhinney, 2001) pointed that from language input to output, we need absorption. Absorption is a selective process between the target language input and learner inter language rules system, the understanding of the language input is not equal to the absorption, deep processing of language input is conducive to better absorption.

So the theory of modern foreign language teaching believes that language learning is a process of input, absorption and output. That is, let the learner to contact with the large quantity of understandable language first, then through the communicative situation and context specifics to understand the meaning and then use it. By using English movies in English listening and speaking teaching emphasizes the language input, also stressed the importance of language output. English movies are available for a full range of language input by the appreciation of plot and the subtitles which can be used for reading. The real context will help students in a natural communication environment in language learning, also to enable students have a deeper understanding by using the corresponding English language, then put what they have learned in English movie like words, sentences, proverbs and so on into following language communication. So by using the English movies in the English class can create a good English learning environment, Chinese College students can improve their listening and speaking skills, they can enlarge their vocabulary knowledge and they can even make their pronunciation and intonation better. It is new concept of College English teaching, a kind of method to promote the reformation of College English teaching. Rose (Rose, K., 2001) believes that the excellent training effect of using English movies on listening and speaking teaching is clearly, English movies are the ideal teaching materials which should be fully used in English teaching. So English teachers must seriously consider the issue on how to use the original English movie to improve Students' oral English in class.

II. THE ROLES OF ENGLISH MOVIES IN CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS' ORAL ENGLISH LEARNING

In 1932, The association of British geography announced that they began to use 200 projectors to carry out teaching in geography class in primary and secondary schools in the UK, that is the establishment of the embryonic form of movie teaching. In 1934, the British movie Association advocated that use the movie teaching in history, science, physics, etc.. In 1956, the British Modern Language Association introduced the movie teaching into the language teaching for the first time. At the end of the 1980s, Tuffs and Tudor (Tuffs,R., Tudor,L.,1990) introduced movie teaching into English teaching, which is as the second language teaching. Then, the movie teaching has been widely used in the teaching of second language and foreign language teaching. The biggest advantage of using movie in teaching is to provide a context for the discussion and communication of each kind of imaginative themes, because the movie theme presented auditory and visual pictures, even with limited English, students also can understand what happened. And college English teaching practice has proved that English movie, with its unique culture, and authenticity, plays a special role in teaching English speaking, no matter as a means of teaching or a kind of teaching content. we can get better effect than using the other teaching methods such as multimedia slides, tape recorders.

A. To Stimulate Students' Interest in Learning

Interest is the best teacher. Once the learning interest has formed, it will enable students to produce a strong desire to learn actively. The theory of cognitive psychology speaking, combining the images with words accords with the law of cognition and language learning. Lucantonio's (Lucantonio, D., 2000) experimental results show that students have great interests in teaching by movies. In the traditional college English listening and speaking class, teachers always put a recording in English first, then let the students listen and answer the questions according to the tape, or assign the students to make up and practice situational dialogue according to the giving scenario design. This kind of teaching mode is too dull, students' enthusiasm in participating will be reduced after a long time. But the movie, as a special audio-visual media, it can make the information rich and colorful and to become a kind of vivid image by combining the sound with image, the language information and specific situation. Combining with visual input and auditory input, using movies in teaching can mobilize students to receive information in a variety of sensory ways, then make a comprehensive understanding of language information. And combining the visual and auditory together effectively can help students do the efficient and meaningful knowledge construction activities, so as to promote the development of their comprehensive ability. Also, the authentic context and rich story in English movies can fully arouse the students' interests to capture and understand language information actively, then let students have enough confidence to listen, to see, to understand, and finally to motivate their learning desire and interest in learning. Therefore, by the rich and vivid content in English movies, we can not only stimulate students interest in learning and enjoy it, but also improve the efficiency of learning, make the classroom atmosphere become actively.

B. To Help the Students to Improve the Level of English Speaking

There has been created a very favorable language environment for Chinese College students to have a deeper understanding, control effectively and use flexibly of English by English movies. Benson (Benson, V., 1993) points out that compared with traditional teaching, teaching by movies meet the acquisition conditions which proposed in input hypothesis theory. In the movie materials, there are many characteristics like the authenticity of language, lying in daily life, and providing a large number of input of real target language for the learners. In the movie teaching, by using the picture and caption, we can change the target language which has a higher level into a kind of language input the learners can understand easily. In appreciation of English movie, students can hear the authentic language in authentic English environment, and mostly the story are based on real life, while watching the movie, students may have the feeling of be personally on the scene and then make the language learning in the real communication context like to repeat the language of movie characters, to imitate the speaker's tone and so on, in fact, it is the process of language acquisition. English in English original movie is kind of real spoken English, it is originally and sound beautiful. English original movies provide the best English material for students to practice speaking, which is the most direct and effective method in learning a language. Therefore, teachers can provide a rich, vivid image of the material by English movies to cultivate and improve students' English level and ability in oral English.

C. To Help Students to Understand the American Culture and Background Knowledge

Learning a foreign language is not only to master the pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and sentence patterns, but also to further understand its culture, because language is the carrier of culture, learning a language is a process of learning its culture. Therefore, an important part of college English teaching is of the Anglo American culture and background knowledge learning. English movies, showing the English national culture from multi angle and multi-level, and providing the corresponding cultural background knowledge, it is the most vivid and intuitive reflect on the social and cultural life of a country and the nation. For example, "Forest Gump", reflects the Vietnam War, peace talks, the sixties American students' movement, racial discrimination and many other background knowledge. Therefore, watching English movies can help students deeply understand the English national way of thinking, customs, historical tradition and other aspects of the background knowledge, feel the culture differences between the East and the west, and enhance the cross-cultural awareness of their language using, that is we cannot get in the traditional classroom teaching in English.

Thus, it can help to make up for the traditional college English teaching deficiencies by English movies, it integrated the English listening, speaking, reading and other basic skills training to create a real English environment, make the student practice the pure voice in more authentic language environment.

III. SOME ISSUES SHOULD BE NOTICED IN SELECTION OF ENGLISH MOVIE IN TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING

Using English movies in teaching English speaking is one of the comprehensive training methods of students' spoken English and other related ability. But the choice of teaching material determines the quality of teaching effect. So from the teaching theory and teaching practice perspective, the selection of the movies is the key, some issues should be paid attention in the choice of English movies:

A. *A Large Amount of Dialogues Is Needed in English Movies*

There are various English movies covered an enormous variety of topics, but not all movies are suitable for the spoken English teaching. At present, commercial natures are appeared in many English movies, their pursuit of actions and rich backgrounds lead to less dialogues. But we need the clear pronunciation and better content in an English movie which can be used in the speaking English teaching, so that it can make the students learn the pronunciation and intonation, words and expressions. So in the choice of English movies, in order to imitate we can choose those dialogues are more pure, slower and the plots are more simple and characters vividly, it can help attract the attention of students, at the same time, some classical movies can reflect social customs, the Anglo American Humanities, social and cultural life, historical figures and events and so on, those are suitable as the teaching materials in the speaking English teaching.

B. *Content Should Be Healthy*

The current English movies are uneven in content, the basis of choosing English movies should be the positive outlook on life and world, those promoting violence, pornography or horror should be excluded, because students can edify sentiment from the movies which have positive topics, but the movies are full of violence and pornography may make people fall into a wrong path. According to the students' age, interest, cognitive level, learning objectives, existing problems, teachers should choose some movies which reflect the friendship, integrity, optimistic, brave and human feelings and social reality etc. for students to appreciate and learn. At the same time, the theme of English movies mostly are about love, war, police etc., the inconsistencies and difference of values between the Western and China may cause impact on students, so teachers should remind students to do critical study.

C. *Length Should Be Moderate, and the Level of Language Difficulty Should Be from Easy to Difficult*

There is limited in college English speaking class, so in the choice of movie, teachers should pay attention to the movie's length. Teaching effect will be influenced if the students produce such feelings as fatigue and boredom for speed faster and long boring movie. Therefore, according to different types of movies, the time controlling should be different, such as documentary should be controlled in 60 minutes, story in 90 minutes. At the same time, the difficulty of dialogues directly affects the spoken teaching effect, the breakthrough point of students' speaking ability are those simple and wonderful movie clips. So there should be a difficulty gradient in the selection of movies, at the beginning teachers can choose some English movies with simple plots and clear pronunciation to share with students, such as: "The sound of music", "Love Story" etc.. Then later teachers can choose some movies with fast talking, complex plots. A selection of movies should always be accompanied by a certain challenge, so as to enable students to learn, and maintain student interest in exploring new knowledge.

In a word, teachers should select the movies which are close to the college life and can reflect the flavor of the times such as romance, drama, war movies, science fiction, the disaster piece, crime movies, epic themes, etc. which covering education, family, marriage, love, inspirational life, philosophy of life theme. Those movies including *Forest Gump*, *Dead Poets Society*, *The Graduate*, *Kramer VS Kramer*, *Scent of a Woman*, *Philadelphia*, *The Shaw shank Redemption*, *Casablanca*, *2012*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *Mona Lisa Smile*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, *Big Fish*, *A Walk in the Clouds*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sleepless in Seattle* and so on.

IV. DESIGNING OF CLASS TEACHING

When using English movies in English classes, the teacher's role should be a designer or a leader. Watching English original movies is not just refer to the learning process is that teachers playing and students watching. In order to fulfill the original movie language's teaching advantages and cultivate students' oral English ability, the teachers must design specific teaching activities well.

A. *Preparation*

Prepare English movies for the spoken English teaching is not just say the teachers to watch the movie from A to Z, but to determine the key in the teaching, that is to prepare the relevant information such as movie related words and pictures, cultural background, character introduction, the outline of the story, wonderful dialogue etc. before class, and classify the involved information such as slang, words, expressions so that to give explanation to students before class,

at the same time, design activities such as fill in the blanks or choice questions according to the movies plot in advance in order to examine the students' understanding of the main idea and details of the movie. Meanwhile, teachers should also ask students to search for relevant information in advance. For example, before watching the *Forest Gump*, the teacher can let the students search for relevant information including history, politics, diplomacy, music in the United States and even the American values and other aspects.

B. Before Watching

Before watching the movie, teachers need to introduce movie -relevant information including background, history, location, main character profiles to the students, to help students to grasp the outline of the story, and then give some clues about the content where they should pay attention to, make a moderate explanation on slang, the key vocabulary and expressions in order to help student to overcome the obstacles in the following speaking activities. Teachers should play the leading role in teaching activities to guide the students to understand the movie language and culture effectively. At the same time, according to the plot teachers can design some problems appropriately, or ask students to prepare a good speech after watching, such as to summarize the outline of the story, or sketch the character's image and interpret the cultural phenomenon, let the students to watch movies with problems, they will focus on the movies and find clues to the related problem, which is convenient for students to grasp the key.

C. During Watching

Due to the limited time in classroom teaching activity, teachers can let the students to watch the whole movie for the first time to understand the movie content. During watching the movie, teachers should ask students pay attention to vocabulary learning, but not "the word on the word". And teachers need to introduce historical background, plot summary and the relationship between the characters, point out language difficulties, which helps students to understand the story and dialogue better. Finished the first time, the teachers can find out classic clips as the speaking material to watch repeatedly, then let the students to imitate, or do some dictation about the dialogue which has a moderate speeding so that the students will learn the language efficiently. Finally, students should not merely understand the surface meaning, but to see the essence through the phenomena, to excavate the profound cultural connotation from the language so that to achieve the supreme state of listening and speaking of foreign knowledge learning.

D. After Watching

Watching a movie is not the final purpose, but to improve students' oral English application ability. After watching, teachers should design some colorful classroom activities, to mobilize the enthusiasm of students to participate in classroom discussions and put what they have learnt into usage. That is the key point of playing and watching a film in English class. For example, in order to improve the writing ability teachers can require students to rewrite the story or write the reviews or their own feelings, analyze the main characters etc.. Also let the students to recite the classic dialogue, then organize students to play a character according to movie can stimulate the students' desire to perform greatly, teachers should seize the chance to encourage and appreciate their enthusiasm in order to practice oral English. In addition to watching movie s and imitating the dialogue, learn to sing some well-known classical songs can also help students to practice their pronunciation and intonation better.

V. SOME PROBLEMS MAY EXIST IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING BY USING MOVIES

A. Possible Problems

As it is known to all that everything has two sides, there are some problems may exist by using English movies in college English teaching, also. First of all, the teachers may have to spend a lot of time preparing the English movie class, because on the one hand, there are no available textbook on English movie teaching, teachers have to select a suitable movie by themselves. On the other hand, English movie itself contains a lot of its country's history and culture, which lead in teachers have to watch one movie over and over again to search for the related useful information. Then teacher's burden is much heavier than before. Secondly, watching an English movie is not for entertainment but act as a tool of learning English, students need some related exercises to consolidate what they have learnt in the movie. If there is no proper exercises, students' attention may be paid much to the film they watched is whether the hero is handsome or if the female leading role's clothing is fashionable or not and so on, in a word, all are the things that have nothing to do with language learning. So the teachers need to devise the match exercises, which is the hardest part in a class activity. And what's more, for the different language level, some students may rely on the subtitle translation too deeply, or some students may be too relaxed to forget the purpose and aim of watching the movie in class, then they can't achieve the purpose of practicing their speaking skills, so the how to devise the class teaching procedure is another difficult point to the teacher.

B. The Solutions to the Problems

In order to fulfill the superiority of English movie in teaching, besides choosing an appropriate movie and devising the match related exercises, teachers also should adopt varied teaching methods, such as to consider both the recreation

and students' English level and capacity of acceptance when selecting a film. And we know attitude decides everything, but some students do not treat playing an English movie seriously, they think it is just a way of relax. Especially, some teachers just play it and then they let it go. So it is important to converse both teachers and students' attitude, let them aware the importance of using a movie in English teaching. Only when they have a right attitude to English movies teaching could it fulfill its advantages. What's more, as the leader and designer of the class, teachers should design class activities well so that to fulfill the original film language's teaching advantages, to cultivate students' comprehensive language ability, to understand and digest the knowledge in the film, and at last to practice students' oral English.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the new century, the traditional teaching way of concentrating on offering the basic knowledge and skills of a language via transfer of grammatical knowledge and explanation of vocabulary usages couldn't meet the society's need, so it has gradually been replaced by the more modern effective means and methods. In the college English teaching, create the best learning environment is very important in practicing oral English, English movie could help English teaching and learning, because it is based on the features of language learning and teaching, taking culture background into consideration. So using English movies in teaching is an effective teaching method which provides students with a better carrier, to enable students to learn the language in a real language environment and find out the cultural differences between Chinese and Western, then students' motivation can be aroused, and flexibility in real occasions will be cultivated. therefore enhancing the ability of foreign language communication and application.

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Xianghui Li was born in Hebei Province, China in 1980. She received her Master's degree in Higher Education from Hebei College, China in 2010. Currently she is a lecturer in the Foreign Language department, Hebei Finance College, China. Her research interests include English literature, and teaching English as a foreign language.

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