

Research on the Cultivation of Students' Autonomous Learning Ability in College English Listening Teaching

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Abstract:

To keep pace with the development of the digital and intelligent era, many universities have carried out reforms on college English curricula, resulting in a sharp reduction in class hours for the course. Against this backdrop, students are required to rely less on teachers' in-class instruction and develop sound autonomous learning capabilities. Based on a survey of college students' autonomous learning in English listening courses at our university, this study analyzes the prominent problems of students' generally poor listening proficiency and inadequate autonomous learning skills. It further puts forward strategies to improve students' autonomous learning ability in English listening, aiming to enhance the overall effectiveness of college English listening teaching.

Keywords:

College English, English Listening Teaching, Students' Autonomous Learning Ability

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the in-depth advancement of college English teaching reform in the new era, fostering students' language application competence and lifelong learning ability has become a core teaching objective. As a key link of language input, English listening serves as a fundamental component for improving students' intercultural communication competence and their integrated skills in reading, writing and translation. College English listening teaching highlights students' subjectivity and initiative, and autonomous learning ability has evolved into a core competency that determines the efficiency and sustainability of the improvement of students' listening literacy.

Autonomous learning refers to a standardized and systematic learning mode in which learners independently formulate learning plans, select learning resources, regulate the learning process and evaluate learning outcomes based on their own learning needs and development goals.

Currently, most universities have established online-offline blended learning platforms for listening practice. These platforms break the time and space constraints of traditional in-class listening training and provide solid hardware and resource support for students' autonomous listening learning. Nevertheless, prevalent problems including students' weak awareness of autonomous learning, inadequate learning

strategies and insufficient process supervision still exist in actual teaching practices, hindering the improvement of listening teaching quality. Accordingly, based on a survey on students' autonomous learning ability in college English listening courses at the author's university, this study explores the existing problems and underlying causes of college students' autonomous learning in English listening. It aims to offer empirical evidence and pedagogical references for optimizing college English listening teaching models and building a regular system for students' autonomous listening learning.

2. A Survey and Analysis on Students' Autonomous Learning in College English Listening

2.1. A Survey on the Current Situation of Students' Autonomous Learning Ability in College English Listening Teaching

This study selected freshmen of non-English majors from our university as respondents, covering science, engineering, humanities, agriculture and other disciplines. A self-designed Questionnaire on Autonomous Learning Ability in College English Listening was adopted in the survey. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 478 valid ones were retrieved, with an effective response rate of 95.6%. Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data was conducted to summarize the overall characteristics of students' autonomous learning ability. Combined with their completion of after-class autonomous listening tasks, this paper further explores the difficulties and subjective perceptions existing in students' autonomous English listening learning.

The survey data show that over 94.7% of students recognize the importance of English listening learning, yet only 21.4% realize the necessity of autonomous learning in this area. A total of 73.2% of students remain heavily reliant on teachers. Their motivation for English listening learning stems from external pressures such as course assessments and CET-4 and CET-6 examinations, rather than an internal desire to improve their language proficiency. In addition, 2.08% of the students state that they have no idea about autonomous English listening learning at all. In terms of the completion of after-class autonomous listening tasks, 78.7% of students failed to finish assigned learning activities based on listening materials including English news, lectures and video clips within the required time.

Overall, most students only regard autonomous English listening learning as merely finishing listening assignments after class. They lack the initiative to expand learning content and make up for their weaknesses in listening, resulting in a serious deficiency in internal motivation for autonomous learning.

2.2. Analysis of the Causes for the Current Situation of Students' Autonomous Learning Ability in College English Listening Teaching

2.2.1. From the Perspective of Students

The long-term exam-oriented education model has fostered a passive learning mindset among students. Most of them retain the learning habits developed in middle school, relying heavily on teachers' arrangements, supervision and assessments. They have failed to adapt to the autonomous and personalized learning mode in universities, with little awareness or independent thinking for self-directed learning.

Meanwhile, students hold a biased understanding of English listening learning. They generally equate it with doing exercises for exams, ignoring its practicality and cumulative nature as a language skill, and lack the patience for steady, long-term progress.

Furthermore, for non-English majors, college English listening is merely a public course, so they attach little importance to it and are unwilling to devote ample time and energy to learning. In addition, freshmen tend to have poor time management skills. Faced with a variety of courses and rich campus life, they fail to allocate time properly for English listening, which further undermines their execution of autonomous listening learning.

2.2.2. From the Perspective of Teaching

The teaching mode of current college English listening classes remains rigid. Some teachers still follow the conventional routine of playing listening materials, assigning exercises and checking answers in class. They focus excessively on exam-oriented training and neglect to cultivate students' awareness of autonomous listening learning.

Though most universities have built diversified online listening platforms and collected abundant high-quality resources, they provide insufficient guidance on how to use them. Most students fail to fully understand and utilize these resources, which thus cannot effectively support their autonomous learning.

English listening teaching also lacks guidance on personalized learning methods. There is no flexible teaching for students at different proficiency levels, leaving them without suitable self-study strategies. Furthermore, post-class supervision is inadequate. Most teachers only assign listening tasks, with little follow-up supervision, Q&A support or timely feedback on students' after-class learning. Consequently, it is hard to help students develop regular habits of autonomous English listening learning.

2.2.3. From the Perspective of Assessment

At present, most college English listening assessments adopt a summative closed-book written test as the main evaluation method, relying solely on unified final examinations. Such assessment is simplistic in form, rigid in scenarios and limited in evaluation dimensions. It only focuses on the final exam results and completely ignores students' autonomous learning process, learning engagement, learning performance and progress throughout the semester, with no process-oriented and dynamic evaluation system established.

On the one hand, uniform written exams cannot record key autonomous learning behaviors such as students' after-class listening practice hours, resource utilization efficiency and implementation of learning plans, so they fail to objectively reflect students' actual ability in autonomous English listening learning. On the other hand, the one-size-fits-all standardized assessment applies identical criteria to all students, without setting tiered standards according to their varying listening proficiency and progress in autonomous learning. It cannot meet the needs of personalized autonomous learning, nor can it motivate and guide students to learn listening independently. The absence of a sound evaluation system for autonomous listening learning makes students' learning outcomes unrecognized, which greatly dampens their enthusiasm for self-study.

To sum up, students' subjective awareness, teaching modes, the rational utilization of English listening resources and the evaluation mechanism for students' autonomous listening learning all exert influences on the cultivation of college students' autonomous learning ability in English listening.

3. Research on Strategies for Cultivating Students' Autonomous Learning Ability in College English Listening Teaching

In view of the current situation and existing problems concerning college students' autonomous learning ability in English listening, this study puts forward the following approaches, hoping to promote the development of college English listening teaching.

3.1. Reshaping Students' Perception of Autonomous English Listening Learning

Students are the main participants and practitioners in English listening learning. To address the problems such as superficial cognition, insufficient motivation and disorganized planning in their autonomous listening learning, the top priority is to transform their role from passive recipients into active constructors, and reshape their cognitive system and behavioral patterns for listening learning. Especially against the backdrop of a sharp reduction in college English class hours, it is essential to break students' ingrained mindset of relying on classroom teaching and teachers.

To begin with, teachers should guide students to establish a long-term and application-oriented philosophy for English listening learning and abandon the narrow exam-oriented mindset. By sharing learning cases and demonstrating the application of listening skills in cross-cultural scenarios, students can fully recognize the core value of English listening as language input, as well as the long-term benefits of persistent autonomous listening learning for cross-cultural communication and future career development. This helps reduce utilitarian learning attitudes and foster internal learning motivation.

Additionally, teachers should guide students to build a personalized and systematic autonomous learning system for English listening. Based on students' varied listening proficiency, instructors may help them go beyond textbook materials and develop a categorized listening resource library tailored to different levels. At the basic stage, students can consolidate pronunciation and language sense with textbook audio and slow-speed English materials. At the advanced stage, authentic materials such as English news, lectures, original video clips and foreign interviews can be adopted to accommodate different learning demands resulting from varied listening foundations. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to improve students' time management skills. Students are encouraged to properly arrange spare time and make full use of fragmented time for regular listening practice, so as to enhance the implementation effect of their autonomous listening learning.

3.2. Constructing a Strategy-oriented Guidance Teaching Model

To address the rigid teaching mode prevailing in current English listening classes, college English listening teaching needs to shift from knowledge-based instruction to autonomous learning-oriented teaching, and establish a guidance system centered on the cultivation of students' autonomous learning abilities.

Firstly, reform the paradigm of English listening teaching and implement an integrated teaching model combining strategy instruction and after-class extension. Departing from the traditional mode of collective exercises and one-way lecturing,

teachers can systematically incorporate listening learning strategies into classroom teaching. Specialized strategy training is conducted in modules, including phonetic recognition, context prediction, keyword extraction, main idea extraction and analysis of complex passages. Targeted practical exercises are also arranged to help students master effective listening learning methods.

Secondly, adopt differentiated and tiered teaching guidance to meet students' personalized development needs. Teaching is divided into different levels and groups according to students' listening proficiency. For students with weak foundations, emphasis is placed on pronunciation correction, basic language sense cultivation and application of simple listening skills. For intermediate learners, focus is laid on text comprehension and flexible use of listening strategies. Advanced students receive high-level training such as intensive listening and retelling, listening-based critical thinking and cross-cultural listening interpretation. In this way, students at all levels can obtain targeted guidance for autonomous learning.

Thirdly, strengthen the process supervision of students' after-class autonomous English listening learning. Teachers should abandon the after-class management model that focuses merely on assigning tasks rather than supervision, and establish a regular mechanism for after-class Q&A and guidance to address students' problems such as pronunciation errors, improper use of strategies and comprehension deviations in targeted ways. Meanwhile, regular activities including experience sharing on listening methods and daily retelling practice can be held to help students form a closed-loop learning habit of learning, practicing, reflecting and revising, so as to steadily enhance their autonomous learning capabilities.

3.3. Improving the Evaluation Mechanism for Students' Autonomous English Listening Learning

To tackle issues including insufficient self-monitoring and lack of feedback on learning outcomes, a diversified process-oriented evaluation mechanism consisting of self-assessment, peer assessment, comprehensive teacher evaluation and platform-based testing should be established to form a complete closed-loop management for autonomous English listening learning.

On the one hand, cultivate students' ability of self-assessment in autonomous English listening learning. Teachers should guide students to set up personal error logs and learning journals, and regularly conduct in-depth reviews on phonetic weaknesses, vocabulary gaps and improper use of strategies in practice. This helps students accurately identify their deficiencies, and dynamically adjust learning plans and training methods accordingly to improve the efficiency of autonomous listening learning.

On the other hand, reform the single end-of-term evaluation model and enhance the weight of process-based assessment. Factors such as the duration of after-class autonomous listening practice, completion of self-study plans and utilization of learning resources shall be incorporated into the course assessment system to reduce the over-reliance on exam scores. Meanwhile, a regular feedback mechanism should be put in place. Teachers shall give regular comments on students' autonomous learning outcomes and monitor their learning behaviors in real time via online teaching platforms. Targeted intervention and one-on-one tutoring will be provided for students with low motivation, poor task execution or frequent errors, so as to

correct improper learning behaviors and ensure a standardized and effective autonomous listening learning process.

Taking the college English listening course of our university as an example, the traditional final examination has been abolished after teaching reform, ending the single evaluation system where a single test determines the final grade. Instead, tiered computer-based tests are adopted. Students at different levels take corresponding listening tests, and each student is allowed three attempts, with the highest score counted as the final result.

Students do regular practice via online listening resources and then take computer-based tests to assess their outcomes of autonomous learning. This evaluation method effectively helps them find and make up for knowledge gaps and identify their weaknesses in listening. Such a flexible, dynamic and process-oriented evaluation system further stimulates students' internal motivation and initiative in listening learning.

4. Conclusions

Currently, the overall autonomous English listening learning ability of non-English majors in universities is below average, featuring superficial cognition, disorganized planning, simplistic strategies and inadequate self-evaluation. Although students have basic awareness of autonomous learning, common problems include insufficient internal motivation, poor ability to formulate and carry out learning plans, lack of scientific learning strategies and the absence of self-monitoring and evaluation systems. These issues stem from multiple factors: students' ingrained passive learning mindset, imperfect teaching guidance from instructors, and inadequate evaluation and incentive mechanisms.

Based on the problems identified, this study constructs a comprehensive and multi-level pathway for students' autonomous English listening competence from three dimensions: empowering students as the main body, innovating classroom teaching, and optimizing evaluation and management mechanisms. It forms an integrated education system featuring student autonomy, teacher guidance and dynamic evaluation.

Targeting the practical difficulties in students' autonomous listening learning, this pathway balances practicality and long-term effectiveness. It is expected to resolve various dilemmas in this field, help students improve their listening skills, and effectively fulfill the core goals of college English teaching in the new era: cultivating students' language application ability and lifelong learning competence.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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