A Study of English Listening and Speaking Teaching Mode for College Students: Using Multimedia Network Technology

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The rapid development of globalization has increased the amount of communication taking place worldwide. Hence, for a college student in this century, a good command of English, especially in terms of oral communication skills, has become essential. This paper presents an overview of two teaching modes: the traditional approach to classroom teaching, and the multimedia network-based mode. In order to compare the effectiveness of each mode, two hundred non-English major freshmen from the University of Science and Technology Liaoning were chosen as subjects. They were divided equally into two groups comprising control classes and experimental classes. All classes undertook a basic college English course, although the control classes were taught using the traditional teaching method, and the experimental classes were taught using the new teaching approach. Subsequently, students in the experimental classes were surveyed to determine their opinions about and attitudes to the new mode of teaching. The results showed that the students in the experimental classes had significantly improved English listening and speaking performance compared to the students in the control classes. Moreover, most of the students in the experimental classes considered that the new teaching mode was more interesting and better stimulated their interest in learning.

Keywords: College English, multimedia network, listening and speaking teaching, teaching mode

1.   INTRODUCTION

Indisputably, English is now the main language used for international communication. In recent years, China's position in the world has been improved, and "Chinese fever" has gradually increased. However, due to the difficulty of learning the Chinese language, the main international communication language is still English. In order to cope with the increasingly rapid international development, English education is becoming more and more important (Li, 2015). In particular, for the college students who are about to enter the workforce, their level of English can affect their career direction and determine their employability. However, regardless of the reading and translation, the most important function of English is to facilitate communication, which requires listening and speaking skills. However, in the traditional English teaching process, teachers tend to unilaterally impart knowledge to students and focus on performance in written tests. Less attention is paid to oral English and verbal interaction, which eventually leads to the emergence of "dumb" English (Chen, 2015). With the progress of science and the emergence of multimedia network technology, the traditional method of teaching English is slowly evolving, and there is now a greater focus on the teaching of listening and speaking skills, so that students can avoid the embarrassment of having to resort to "dumb" English. Zhang (2017) explored the importance

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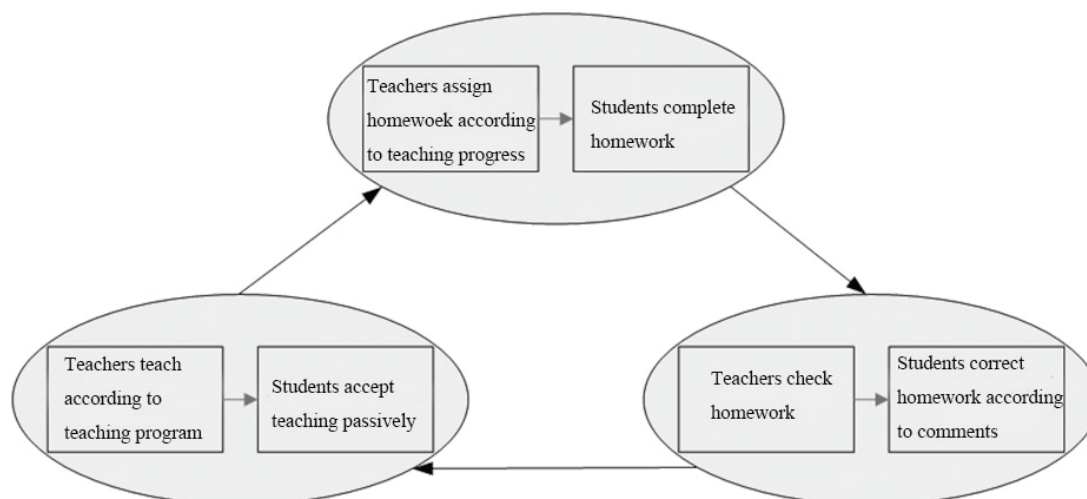
Figure 1 The traditional English listening and speaking teaching mode.

of micro-classes and flipped classes, integrating educational information technology into the college English teaching mode. They propose several strategies that enable this innovation to be applied so as to improve teaching quality. Li (2016) discussed the emergence and development of a new teaching mode -Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)- and compared it with the traditional teaching mode, finding that MOOC had more advantages in oral English teaching. Qiao et al. (2018) proposed an empirical analysis model of college English teaching reform based on computer big data and found that the model had high accuracy and could provide an effective basis for English teaching reform. In this paper, a brief introduction was given of the traditional and multimedia network-based teaching modes. For the purpose of comparison, two hundred non-English major freshmen from the University of Science and Technology Liaoning were chosen as subjects, and divided into equal numbers of control classes and experimental classes. The traditional and new teaching modes were adopted for these classes, respectively. The students' oral skills levels were tested before after the teaching period, and a questionnaire survey was conducted among students in the experimental classes to determine their interest in and attitude to the new teaching mode.

2. ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING TEACHING BASED ON MULTIMEDIA

2.1 Traditional English Listening and Speaking Teaching

When teaching English using the traditional approach, teachers usually impart knowledge to students according to a step-by-step teaching plan, focusing on the written test of English, that is, reading comprehension (Zhao, 2019). The traditional English listening and speaking teaching mode is shown in Figure 1, and comprises three steps. Firstly, the teacher teaches the students according to the lesson plan, the students passively accept the teaching, and there is little

teacher-student interaction in the classroom. For homework, the teacher sets appropriate listening tasks according to the teaching plan, and the students complete the assignments, again without any interaction between teachers and students or between students. After that, the teacher corrects the homework and explains mistakes in class. The students correct any homework errors according to the comments and explanation. Then the teacher repeats the same steps in every class throughout the course.

One of the advantages of the traditional English listening and speaking teaching mode is that it is easy to manage. In this mode, students are regarded as a whole, and the teacher's corrections and explanations of mistakes made by individuals are given by the teacher to the class as a whole. In this way, those who have made mistakes are alerted to them, and those who have not made mistakes become aware of possible mistakes that they need to avoid in future.

However, with the development of English education and the demand for higher levels of English skills, the traditional teaching mode used for English listening and speaking has gradually exposed its disadvantages: ① the teaching mode is single: students only keep pace with teachers in the classroom when learning oral English, and there is little student autonomy; ② the mode is rigid: as shown in Figure 1, the traditional mode follows the prescribed teaching plan, i.e., the classroom teaching, homework after class and homework explanation, and students are prone to boredom, which is not conducive to improving the quality of teaching or learning; ③ it is difficult to make full use of spare time: the traditional mode of teaching focuses mainly on the classroom and is not concerned with the more productive use of spare time for the purpose of learning (Cui, 2017).

2.2 English Listening and Speaking Teaching Based on Multimedia Network Technology

With the popularity of the Internet and the development of innovative teaching tools, the approach used for teaching
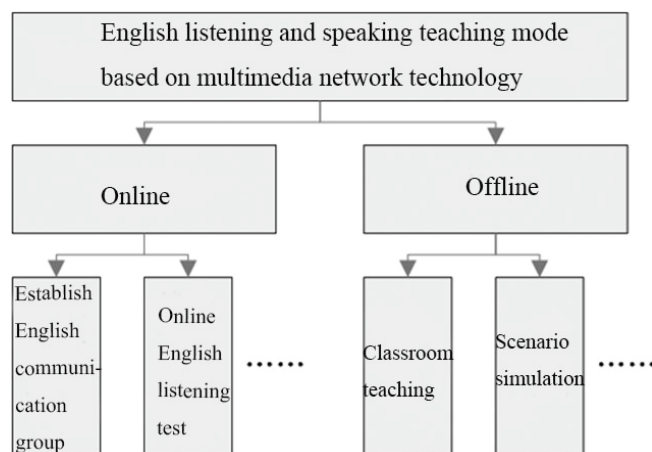
Figure 2 The new English teaching mode with multimedia technology.

English has gradually changed from the one-way imparting of information to mutual feedback, in which multimedia network technology plays an important role. Multimedia network technology is a technology that combines text, video, audio, pictures and other media forms with computers (Xu & Zhang, 2015). One of the more representative is "PPT", also known as PowerPoint, and a single-page PPT is called a 'slide'. In PPT documents, words, pictures, audio and video can be integrated. For example, in an English language class, PPT slides can be projected onto the electronic blackboard by means of a projector connected to a computer. When teachers teach students oral English through PPT, they can simultaneously display words, images and correct pronunciation, thus using several stimuli to strengthen student learning.

The English listening and speaking teaching mode based on multimedia network technology is shown in Figure 2. Unlike the traditional oral teaching mode which focuses on teaching and learning within the classroom only, the new teaching mode allows teaching to be conducted online and offline, and is not subject to constraints of time, space or distance (Guo, 2017).

First of all, offline teaching, including classroom teaching, scenario simulation and so on, can be conducted via multimedia network technology. Teachers use PPT to edit the teaching materials, connect the oral paragraphs that need to be taught with the corresponding audio, and match these with the relevant pictures; then, in the classroom, teachers use PPT to teach students oral English and use audio with standard pronunciation and pictures to make a greater impact on students. In addition, teachers can also show the class some excellent English films with standard pronunciation, so as to enhance students' interest in English, familiarize them with idioms, and cultivate a sense of language and culture. After watching the film, teachers can select one or more segments from the film, and organize the students to perform scenes so as to strengthen their grasp of oral English.

The online mode of teaching multimedia-based English listening and speaking skills includes the establishment of an English communication group and an online English listening test. For example, the teacher organizes students to establish an English communication group on QQ, which stipulates that the communication between the group members shall be in English unless special circumstances exist. In daily extracurricular communication, teachers can upload some excellent English movies to improve student engagement. In addition, teachers can organize listening tests online from time to time to consolidate the students' knowledge. Moreover, because of the convenience afforded by a communication group, teachers can effectively communicate with students outside the classroom and deepen mutual trust, so as to improve the teaching effect (Liu, 2017).

3. EXAMPLE ANALYSIS

3.1 Experimental Subjects

Two hundred non-English major freshmen were selected from the University of Science and Technology Liaoning, comprising equal numbers of males and females. In order to ensure the teaching quality, the students enrolled in the English speaking/listening course were divided into 10 classes, 20 students each class, 10 boys and 10 girls. One teacher was assigned to each class. All of the teachers were female, with an average age of 35 years and 10 years' teaching experience. All of them were proficient in the application of multimedia network technology, as well as being familiar with the traditional teaching mode.

3.2 Experimental Methods

First of all, five classes were randomly selected from 10 classes as experimental classes, and they were taught by the new teaching mode. The remaining five classes were taken as control classes, and were taught using the traditional teaching mode.

The traditional English listening and speaking teaching mode followed this pattern in the classroom: ① teachers taught students oral English according to a set plan: teachers read material from the textbook once, students followed it, and then students listened to and followed the relevant audio; in the teacher also organized classroom tests where the students listened to a segment of English and answered questions to test their comprehension; ② the teacher set homework based on
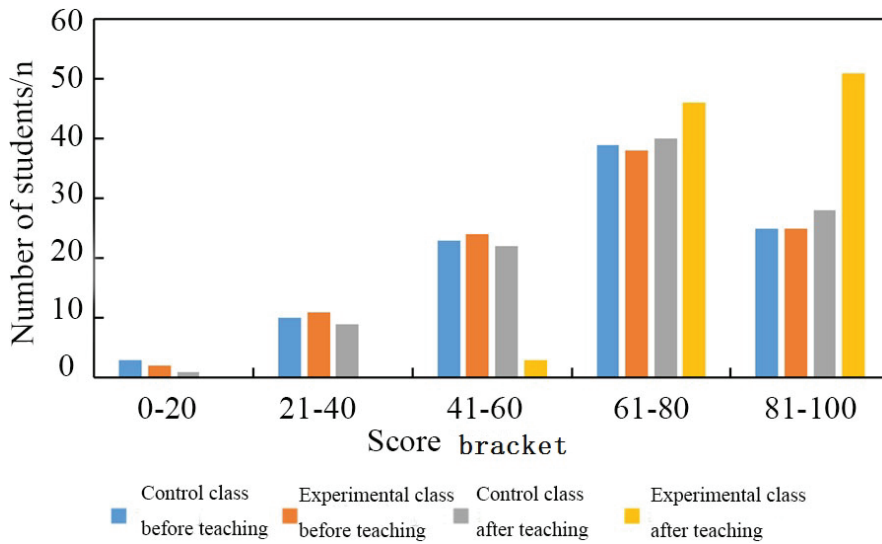
Figure 3 The distribution of the number of students in different English listening score brackets before and after teaching in the control class and experimental class.

one or more sections of English pronunciation; subsequently, any errors made in the homework were corrected and explained by the teacher, and difficult points were clarified.

The multimedia-based English listening and speaking teaching mode implemented with the experimental class was as follows. ① In the classroom, teachers taught students oral English according to the lesson plan; in addition to the traditional follow-up reading, teachers also used PPT to analyze and clarify key points in the oral English teaching materials (Li, 2017). ② Some class time was set aside for students to watch an English video (e.g. movies, TV shows, etc.), with the teaching pointing out and explaining several main aspects of oral English. ③ After class, in addition to the regular oral English homework, students also discussed any difficulties with their classmates and teachers in the communication group. ④ In order for students to make more productive use of spare time outside the classroom, the teachers made available to them some interesting and standard English pronunciation videos to improve the students' understanding of the language used in oral communication; occasionally, teachers posed short English questions and gave answers to the students in the group (Zou, 2017).

3.3 Test of Teaching Effect

In this study, the effectiveness of the two listening and speaking teaching modes was evaluated in terms of the listening and speaking skills acquired by students. First, the effectiveness of listening teaching was tested. Before the formal teaching of the two modes, a listening/comprehension written test was administered to all students. One month after the commencement of the course, a similar test was given to all students, and the results of the two tests were recorded and compared. The performance was divided into five score segments.

Then a test was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the two teaching modes in regard to students' verbal skills. Before the formal teaching of the course commenced, all students were given a scene simulation dialogue test (Han & Lee, 2016). After one month's teaching, all students were tested again with a similar scene simulation dialogue test. The scene simulation tests conducted before and after the teaching were scored by 10 teachers using the 5-point system, 5 points for the best and 1 point for the poorest. The average score was taken as the final result.

Finally, a simple questionnaire survey was conducted among the students in the experimental class (Liu et al., 2016). The questionnaire contained four questions: 1. Do you think using multimedia network technology is a new way of learning? 2. In the process of the new teaching mode, do you have fun and feel more freedom? 3. Do the learning materials provided by the new teaching mode meet your learning needs? 4. Do you think your ability to use English has improved after the course?

3.4 Experimental Results

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 3, before commencing the course, 3 students from the control class and 2 students from the experimental class were in the 0–20 score bracket, 10 and 11 in the 21–40 score bracket, 23 and 24 in the 41–60 score bracket, 39 and 38 in the 61–80 score bracket, and 25 and 25 in the 81–100 score bracket. The average scores of the two classes were 60.3 and 61.5 respectively; after one-month teaching, there were 1 student from the control class and 0 student from the experimental class in the 0–20 score bracket, 9 and 0 in the 21–40 score bracket, 22 and 3 in the 41–60 score bracket, 40 and 46 in the 61–80 score bracket, 28 and 51 in the 81–100 score bracket, and the average scores of the two classes were 66.1 and 84.2, respectively. A comparison of scores shows that before the teaching of listening and speaking, the listening scores of the students in the control class and experimental class were basically the same, and the average score was not much different, indicating that there was little difference between the students in the two classes in terms

Table 1 Number of students in different score brackets and average scores of the control class and experimental class before and after teaching.

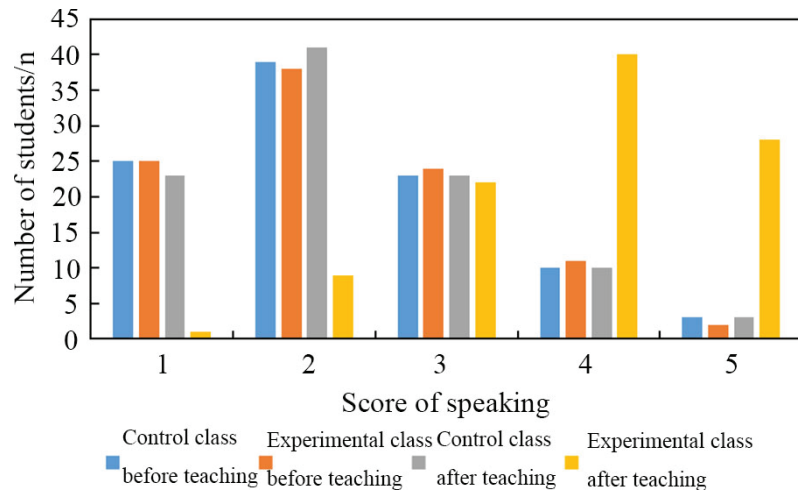| Score bracket	Before teaching		After teaching	
	Control class	Experimental class	Control class	Experimental class
0 ~ 20 (number of students)	3	2	1	0
21–40 (number of students)	10	11	9	0
41–60 (number of students)	23	24	22	3
61–80 (number of students)	39	38	40	46
81–100 (number of students)	25	25	28	51
Average score	60.3	61.5	66.1	84.2

Figure 4 The distribution of the number of students in different speaking score brackets before and after teaching in the control class and the experimental class.
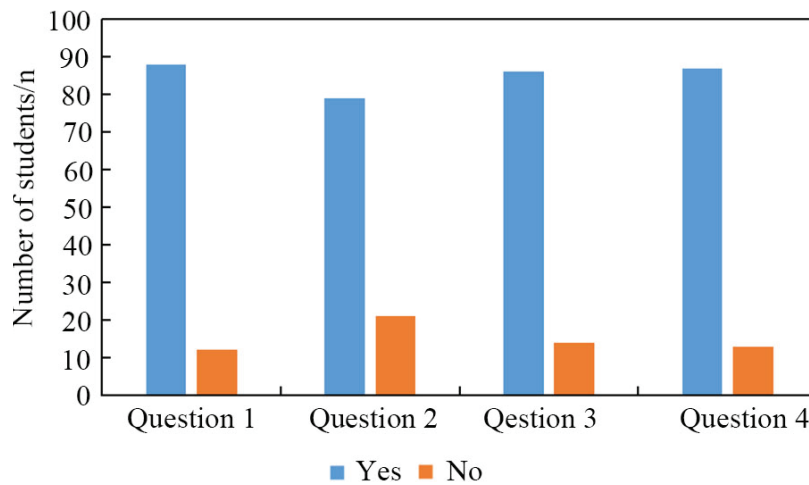

Figure 5 The results of questionnaire survey of the experimental class on the new teaching mode after teaching.

of their listening-comprehension skills. After one month of teaching, the scores of students in the control class improved slightly as did the average score for the whole class, although the increase was not significant. On the other hand, the scores of students in the experimental classes improved significantly, as did the class average. The experimental results showed that the teaching mode based on multimedia network technology was a very effective means of improving students' English listening-comprehension skills.

As shown in Figure 4, the scores for students in all classes, prior to the commencement of the English course, were basically the same particularly for the low-scoring bracket. After being exposed to one month of teaching, compared to

the scores of the control classes, the oral skills of students in the experimental classes which were conducted using the new teaching mode had improved significantly. This is a clear indication that the teaching mode based on multimedia network technology could effectively improve the oral English skills of students.

As shown in Figure 5, after one month, most of the students in the experimental classes had a positive attitude towards the English listening and speaking teaching mode based on multimedia network technology; most students thought that the use of multimedia network technology was a new and more effective way of learning; the new teaching mode enabled them to enjoy learning as it gave them the freedom to choose

the materials that best suited their learning needs. Most importantly, they believed that their ability to use English was improved after the course. The survey results indicate that the multimedia-based English listening and speaking teaching mode could increase students' interest in learning English, and improve their English listening and speaking skills.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper provided a brief introduction to two teaching modes applied to the teaching of English listening and speaking skills: the traditional mode and the multimedia network-based mode. In order to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of each mode, two hundred freshmen from the University of Science and Technology Liaoning, none of whom were English majors, were taken as subjects and divided into a control group and an experimental group, and then randomly assigned to ten classes; five were taught by the traditional method and five were exposed to the new teaching mode. Then, the oral English scores of students' before and after one month of teaching were compared, and the students' opinions on and attitudes to the new teaching mode were investigated using a questionnaire survey. The results are as follows: (1) after one month of teaching, compared with the control class, the experimental class demonstrated significant improvement in their English listening performance; (2) after one month, compared with the control class, the experimental class's oral English performance improved significantly; (3) the results of the questionnaire showed that most of the students in the experimental class had a positive attitude towards the new English teaching mode.

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