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The Influence of Cultural Differences on Chinese College Students' Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

In English listening teaching, the background knowledge of teaching material can help the listener improve listening skills. Traditional teaching neglects the teaching of cultural background knowledge, which influences the effect of listening teaching. Understanding the cultural background can help us better understand western culture and improve the effect of listening, thus improving the teaching efficiency. It should also be an important task for students to understand the cultural differences between the east and the west. In view of the current situation of students' lack of western culture knowledge, it is an urgent task to strengthen the teaching of Western culture in language teaching.

Key words: Cultural difference; English listening; Countermeasures

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INTRODUCTION

Language is inseparable from culture and culture relies on language, English teaching is also the course of cultural education. To China's increasingly urgent need of the distinguished talents and deep contact with western countries, English teaching should attach great importance to the cultivation of communicative abilities

and the subsequent request to learn the cultures call for more and more high level of language teaching. Listening comprehension is a difficult task in language learning and requires analysis and guidance. In the process of learning English, many Chinese students only pay attention to the study of language itself and ignore the understanding of the cultural background. In the process of listening comprehension, many students understood each word and sentence, but still can not correctly understand the connotation of the listening material in the whole article. One of the important reasons is that they don't understand Chinese and western cultures. This article will probe into the process of listening comprehension, further analyzes the cultural differences and its influence on listening comprehension, and finally concentrates on how to use cultural background to present several countermeasures to improve listening comprehension level.

1. THE ROLE OF CULTURAL FACTORS IN IMPROVING LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEVEL

Language and culture are interdependent: Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the content of language. Therefore, the language learning process is also the task of understanding and mastery of English culture. There are idioms in mythology, historical allusions, and conversations about social life such as religion and politics. Most of the information in people's daily life is communicated and acquired in conversation. This information is also the focus in the process of English learning. The lack of cultural background knowledge in the western countries will undoubtedly take a toll on the students' listening comprehension ability. Successful listening comprehension depends on the interaction between the listener's language knowledge and background knowledge. Language learners from different cultural backgrounds have different

understanding of the article because of different cultural education. In language teaching, however, we often only pay attention to the interpretation of language points and grammatical structures, and ignore the language differences in the actual situation and the cultural background. As a result, the students, in the process of listening comprehension, to a large extent depend on the language knowledge, pay a great deal of attention to the words and try to remember the meaning of every word, and understand every word in isolation, but can't understand the connotation of the sentence. The reason does not lie in the language itself, but in the lack of specific knowledge or knowledge of cultural background. Therefore, only with certain cultural consciousness and cultural accumulation, or knowledge of cultural background, can understand the content of the article accurately. Language is the carrier of culture, and so to do well in the listening must implant students with certain knowledge of British and American history and literature. At the same time, it is necessary to understand and familiarize with the living habits, cultural background, customs and life styles of some people in the UK. If this knowledge is poor, it will affect the teaching of listening comprehension.

2. THE REASONS FOR THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listening comprehension is a complex process, in which we move from speech aims to the mental lexicon, and then to the analysis of syntax, pragmatics and discourse coherence. With the cooperation of memory in the brain, we finally accomplish the listening comprehension process of sentence or discourse. From the perspective of listening comprehension, we analyze the cultural factors that interfere with listening.

2.1 Language and Culture Problems

Some students have no good command of the correct pronunciation of words when they begin to learn English. Due to British and American English phonetic differences, British and American English is different in terms of vocabulary, and there are great differences in pronunciation, some of which are quite different. Most English teaching in China adopts the English phonetic teaching system. In recent years, with the opening up to the outside world, a number of American audio textbooks has increased gradually, and some students have been influenced by the hearing impairment because they are not familiar with the differences between British and American phonetics.

2.2 Psychological Factors

The process of listening comprehension is also a complicated mental process. Psychologists believe that

when a person is in a state of stress and anxiety, they tend to have a mental disability that affects what they hear. In addition, external environment also has certain influence on this listening process.

3. ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS EXISTING IN ENGLISH TEACHING

The hearing textbook lacks sufficient and effective introduction of background knowledge. Although there is an introduction to English and American culture, geography and background knowledge, these introductions are simple and difficult to understand. In the past, for example, we used the college English teaching material contents which are not enough close to real life, and look like some boring. However, this kind of teaching cannot attract students' attention and those students lost their interests in language learning.

For teachers, the teaching process lacks the implanting of background knowledge. Teachers often focus on vocabulary and grammar in the process of listening. Most teachers think that the listening material is easy to understand as long as the students has learnt the vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, in the process of teaching, teachers would rather spend time explaining vocabulary and grammar than spend time in introducing the background knowledge.

Students themselves ignore the learning of cultural background knowledge while preparing for listening. After the enrollment in college, the learning strategies have not been improved to adapt to the university learning style. Students are not aware that the lack of cultural background can affect the effect of hearing. They still believe that listening is the understanding of word and grammar, so that the learning of cultural background is neglected in the preparation of listening.

4. SUGGESTIONS ON IMPROVING THE LISTENING ABILITY

4.1 To Change the Teaching Concept of Teachers and Strengthen the Transmission of Cultural Background Knowledge

From the point of view of the requirements in quality education, the modern community requires that students should adapt to international competition requirements in the world, learn other nation's excellent culture, and improve the ability in perceiving cultural quality of the nation. English teaching should also adapt to this requirement, as the English syllabus points out, to help students "understand the world correctly and enhance their understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries". Since language is an inseparable part of culture. It carries the task of conveying culture, so a language teacher is also

a teacher in cultivating students' ability in apprehending the culture. However, the teaching culture must be moderate, and should not be divorced from the language teaching, most teachers believe that the purpose of teaching is to enable students to pass all kinds of examinations. The teacher's task is to improve the students' listening level through listening teaching. Instead of lay the emphasis on the exam, we should strengthen the teaching of cultural knowledge and improve the students' ability to truly master the language. Teachers should also use a variety of means to enhance students' learning of cultural background knowledge. At Christmas time, for example, the teacher can dress up the Christmas tree together, let some students dressed up as Father Christmas who are wearing the stockings and singing Christmas songs together.

4.2 Improving the Acquisition of Cultural Background Knowledge

In terms of the current teaching environment and conditions, mastering certain western cultural background knowledge can be done through classroom teaching process and students' self-study in extracurricular activities. In class teaching, teachers should pay attention to the selection of materials covering a wide range of topics and therefore supplement the knowledge of political, economic, cultural, scientific fields and help students expand their knowledge. In addition, teachers should encourage students to read extensively, read widely, and increase cultural background. Then, with the development of computer network, we should take advantage of the extremely convenient conditions for English learning. For example, the more you utilize the computer, the more you will find that your vocabulary is inadequate and motivate them to accumulate new words.

4.3 Strengthening the Training of Listening Skills

Teachers should pay attention to the training of students' listening skills according to the requirement of the

learning program. The skills of guessing words' meaning according to the context are beneficial to improve their abilities. Based on the pronunciation, intonation, context and logical reasoning knowledge or experience of reflection, prediction, and judgement, we can achieve the purpose of understanding the listening materials; the skills are capturing important information about key words and themes. The skill of memorizing the content of listening is to instruct the students to take notes in the form of the abbreviated numbers and as well as to memorize key phrases (such as time, place, date, number, keywords, etc.) to improve short-term memory effect.

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