

## **Discussion on Choosing Movie Clips in College English Teaching**

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### **Abstract**

*College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* is one kind of college English course in the colleges and universities of China and it is offered as an elective course by many colleges and universities. It aims to develop the comprehensive understanding ability and language competence of the students with regard to culture background, context, and language materials. Combined with the writer's teaching practice, this essay probes into the necessity of choosing movie clips in the college English teaching and how to choose the movie clips, which is to promote the teaching efficiency and help the students meet the demand of the society on their English language ability better.

**Keywords:** College English Teaching, Movie Clips.

### **1. Introduction**

College English curriculum requirements announced by the Ministry of Education of China define the college English course as a component of higher education of China. College English is not only a course teaching basic knowledge of language, but also a competence-oriented course broadening the students' horizon and letting the students get to know the global culture. As a competence-oriented course and an elective college English course in Chinese colleges and universities, *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* just aims to help the students get to know the culture of English speaking countries better, broaden the students' horizon, and promote the students' comprehensive ability of using English.

### **2. Teaching of Watching, Listening and Speaking**

As the world enters the 21st century, China continues to open to the outside world and reaches almost all the countries of the world. Under the background of globalization, opportunities and challenges coexist; language as a communication tool becomes more and more important. *China's National Outline for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* proposes training a large number of internationalized talents who have international vision, have a good knowledge of international rules, and are able to participate in the international affairs and international competition. Having a broad international vision

is an important characteristic of internationalized talents. Internationalized talents must be familiar with and grasp the different cultures, different national customs, values and thinking mode, and the law and trend of development of the world. Cross-cultural communication ability based on a good foreign language level is a basic ability of the internationalized talents and is an important part of the training of internationalized talents. In order to meet the need of the country, Chinese universities and colleges train different types of internationalized talents and they pay more attention to specific training means, such as, teaching materials and teaching management. As a language for international communication, English is widely used in the world. Consequently, a vital component of training talents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to train the students' comprehensive ability of using English. English is a foreign language in mainland of China, there is no English speaking environment in the society for the learners during their real learning process. Lack of real life environment for English learning is a realistic limitation on learners. In order to make up for the lack of real English language environment, the course named *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* is offered in many universities and colleges in China. This course is based on the background knowledge of English culture. It organizes the movie materials by using the multi-media technology. Movie clips under the background of different culture topics bring students relevant background knowledge of English culture, context, and functional expression of English language. In this way, learners participate in the real life environment and are trained to develop the comprehensive understanding ability of cultural background, context and language materials. So, the course is to improve the students' comprehensive ability of using English, especially the ability of listening and speaking.

Movie clips used in the *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* is chosen from the original English films. The language and context is suitable for the learners to grasp authentic English. Movie clips used in the teaching process show different scenes which centered on a specific topic. Learners are trained to use appropriate language to communicate in different contexts and they really put what they learn in the classroom into practice. The learners will not only improve the ability of listening and speaking, but also have a deeper insight into the English language.

### **3. Choosing of Movie Clips**

#### **3.1 Necessity of Choosing Movie Clips**

*College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* is offered as an elective course aimed for competence-oriented education, therefore, there are limited class hours for this course. In the university (which is a regular higher education institution in the southwest of China) of the author, there are only 15 class hours for the elective course; however, the number of students who would choose this course is large, in the author's university, there can be as many as 122 students in a classroom to take the course. In the limited class hours, the learners should be interested in the course and go to class on time in order to achieve effect of learning. In the actual teaching process, some learners take this elective course just with the purpose of getting credits, so they are relatively passive and can't achieve the learning effect; some learners take this course out of their interest, but they ask for leave because they need to take part in club activities, which has negative effect on the course with only 15 class hours. In light of the real situation in the teaching of this course, teachers of *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* should choose the movie clips very carefully. At present, there are plenty of movie clips in the textbooks of *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* used in the universities and colleges of China. It is impossible to cover all the contents of the book in limited class hours. Therefore, it is essential for the teachers to choose some movie clips to teach. The teachers should try to offer corresponding materials in the limited class hours in order to achieve the teaching effect. If the teachers don't choose the movie clips and just repeat what the textbook says, the teaching may become formalistic, because the students also have the textbook and they may think that even they miss one class, they can learn by themselves to make up for it. If the movie clips are chosen carefully by the teacher and they are suitable for the students, they will motivate the students to learn actively. The students will be willing to participate in the classroom and will not miss

class at random.

The textbook for *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* is based on culture and has abundant movie clips. However, the textbooks have been compiled for a period and they don't include the latest movie materials. In the real teaching process, in order to keep pace with the development of the society, the teachers need to find and choose some latest movie clips to enrich the teaching content in the classroom and cut some relatively out-of-date movie clips.

At present, college English test band 4 and band 6 are national tests of vital importance in China. The tests balance the proportion of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation by using contemporary language test theory and methods and aim to reflect the English level of Chinese college students comprehensively. Because the tests have a high level of specialization and a great influence, the grades of the tests are accepted by the employers gradually and are even related to the future of the students and the employment rate of the universities and colleges. Under this background, the college students in mainland of China have to spend a lot time preparing for the band 4 or band 6 tests. In response to this situation, the teachers need to choose some movie clips which can mobilize the students' initiative and help them to pass band 4 or band 6 tests as well.

### 3.2 Ways of Choosing Movie Clips

Before teaching *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking*, the teachers should get to know the exact class hours of this course and the general English level of the students. Generally, a textbook is composed of ten units and each unit consists of three movie clips which are relevant to the topic of the unit. Each unit includes many parts, such as lead-in, plot summary, introduction of the scene, dialogues, vocabulary, cultural background, practice, oral communication, self-learning etc. It is impossible for the teachers to teach every part of the textbook in limited class hours. Therefore, before teaching this course, the teachers may cut some difficult units and choose some units which are appropriate for the students; in order to do it well, the teachers need to get to know the English level of the students and the contents of each unit of the textbook in advance.

In view of the various topics of a textbook, the teachers should not only pay attention to whether the movie is easy or difficult for the students, but also to whether the topic can motivate the students or not. For example, love is the eternal topic of the humans, so the movie clips under the topic of *Love and Romance* naturally attract the students more to participate in the classroom discussion. Another example is that more and more college students go travelling to broaden their horizon during their vacations, and then the movie clips with the topic of *Travel* draw more attention of the students. Although the topics of the textbook are related to the life of the college students and they can help the students know more about the foreign culture, the teachers have to cut some movie clips which are less attractive for the students due to the limited class hours.

Although the textbook of *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* has many advantages, it doesn't include the latest movie clips because it was compiled for a period. In order to keep pace with the modern world, the teachers need to pay attention to the latest information about English movies and choose some new and practical movie clips to show to the students. For example, many textbooks have the topic *Love* and the movie clip from the movie *Titanic* is naturally chosen by the authors of the textbooks. However, many students have watched the movie *Titanic* in high school, so, although reviewing the classic movie is an important way of learning, the teacher need to add some latest movie clips in order to motivate the students better; in this way, the students wouldn't think that the teacher just repeat what the textbook says and they can learn something new. For example, in terms of the topic *Love*, the teachers could choose movie clips from the movie *Before Midnight* to show to the students, and then the students will not only learn English language and English culture, but also learn more and think more about what love is.

As mentioned above, the college students in mainland of China face the objective necessity of passing band 4 or band 6 tests. In response to this, the teachers should get to know the vocabulary of the textbook in advance and choose some movie clips in which the lexical difficulty is suitable for the college English tests. In 2002, the Ministry of Education of China began to promote the reform of college English teaching and it changed the priority on reading and writing into the priority on listening and speaking in order to improve the overall English ability of the students. In the real teaching practice, many students take the *College English through Watching, Listening and speaking* course, which proves that the students are eager to improve their ability of listening and speaking. Many universities and college in mainland of China offering this course just want to meet the need of the students and the demand of the development of the country and the society. However, as Jigang Cai(2011) said, the college students' ability of English reading was not as good as their ability of English listening and speaking; due to the change of the priority of college English teaching and the less class hours, the real situation of college English learning is worse. On average, only about 20% of the students pass the band 4 test in one test, but the grade is valued by many employers in the society. Therefore, consciously choosing some movie clips in which the lexical difficulty is in accordance with the band 4 or band 6 tests will not only improve the listening and speaking ability of the students, but also help the students to improve their ability of English reading.

#### 4. Conclusion

China has stepped into a new stage since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The rise of the international status of China puts forward new requirements for the modernization of universities and colleges. There is a growing call for training internationalized and creative talents. In response to the need of the country and the development of the society, the reform of college English teaching has been conducted accordingly. The aim of offering the course *College English through Watching, Listening and Speaking* is just to improve the listening and speaking ability of the students and the ability of understanding the English culture, and help the students meet the demand of the society on the talents concerning the comprehensive ability of using English. It is necessary to choose movie clips in teaching the course in reality. Reasonably choosing movie clips is beneficial for achieving the teaching effect and is helpful for the students to really improve the ability of using English.

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