

Integrated Teaching Model for Undergraduate English Majors' English Public Speaking Course in China

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Abstract

Recently more and more universities in China design public speaking course in English for the undergraduate English majors. This course can facilitate the students' oral presentation skills as well as critical thinking improvement. In practice, the outcome of public speaking course is not satisfactory for most students feel anxious to speak in a foreign language and the traditional teacher centered teaching model is not sufficient for the enhancement of students' achievement in such oral skill focused course. In this paper, the author investigated a new and creative teaching model to activate students' motivation and forester their performance in English public speaking course for English majors. This model combines neuro-linguistic programming and cooperative approach to create an integrated model. NLP can help recreate a positive and friendly atmosphere for students' success in English public speaking course and cooperative approach is the learning model which emphasis that a group of students to learn together to optimize the learning environment and reach the learning goals. The newly designed integrated model can be an effective model for a valuable and productive English public speaking course.

Keywords

English Public Speaking Course, English Major, NLP, Cooperative Approach

1. Introduction

In modern society, public speaking has become a very important communication skill. Nazara, S. (2011) defined speaking as a distinctive type of spoken discourse to serve social purpose and personal engagement in daily communications for social need and in social environment. Systematic learning of speech skills not

only helps to facilitate one's ability to express, but also helps them develop their own ideas, enhance self-confidence and improve communication skills, make them more logical in reasoning, and philosophical speculation.

Critical thinking is considered as one of the most important citizen qualities and one of the most important training objectives of modern education. William Sumner, an American sociologist and humanist, points out that contemporary education should teach people how to test all beliefs and habits, in short, critical ability (Sumner, 1906). There is a close relationship between public speaking and the cultivation of critical thinking. Public speaking aims to convey information and ideas to specific public groups. If there is only information in the speech but no effective structural organization, or only point of view which they cannot justify to argue. All these conditions indicated that the speaker did not carry out enough serious and in-depth thinking with the issue involved. A qualified, speculative speaker should have a clear and structured understanding of the logical relationship between concepts, the rationality of reason, the difference between facts and opinions (Lucas, 2010).

Since the 90s of 20th century, debate and public speaking contest for college students had become the focus of public attention in China. Many national wide competitions set up tradition of promoting English learning and demonstrating language ability with public speaking. With the promotion of speech competition, colleges and universities began to notice the importance of English public speaking in cultivating students' comprehensive qualities. In the reformation of English teaching, they all tried to use public speaking as an important course to improve learners' English proficiency and critical thinking.

2. Literature Review

In the life of a person there must be at least one time for him or her to present for a large or small group of people. The purpose of delivering public speech is to provide information and ideas to the audience by oral words in limited time (Susniené et al., 2010). Some one thought public speaking as something difficult to learn or a gift someone was born with. But public speaking is a skill that one can learn with proper practice. The preparation of public speaking need to consider a few elements like the situation in which the speech is delivered, the technique the speaker tends to use, and the expected response from the audience. Many researchers pointed out that the biggest problem of delivering public speech is the fear of speaking in front of a group of people (Kurtus, 2001).

Glossophobia is defined as the stress or fear caused by public speaking. For most of people delivering speech in front of a group of audience is frightening. Some researchers claim that "as much as 75% of the population has some level of anxiety regarding public speaking" (Susniené et al., 2010: p. 106). Fear in public speaking can cause very negative effect for distracting concentration in preparation, what's more extreme fear may ruin the speaker's performance in presentation. Fear can constrain the skills used by the speaker to show his or her enthu-

siasm and break the connection between the speaker and the audience.

The framework of NLP can facilitate the change of classroom communication between teacher and students, it can help recreating a positive and friendly atmosphere in classroom for students' success (Rogozińska, 2016), which is a very useful approach to reduce the fear of delivering public speech and motivate the students.

Churches and Terry (2007: pp. 351-353) claim that teaching is “about relationships as well as pedagogy. It is about feelings as well as facts, and it is as much about what goes on inside your head as it is about what goes on in the heads of your students. It is about using your senses as well as your subject knowledge.” NLP is a useful tool to facilitate teachers' better performance in meeting the requirement of their students and parents.

NLP can be a powerful tool in all levels of education (Tosey & Mathison, 2010). Many researchers claimed that NLP can enhance language learning and teaching in classroom it is a supplementary approach in second language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The application of NLP in education can facilitate classroom interaction, modify students' motivation, enhance their personal development even influence their attitude to life.

Cooperative approach defined as all kinds of group work especially conducted under the instruction of teachers. The aim of cooperative approach is to enhance students' development of knowledge and bridge the gap of understanding through group discussion and argumentation (Slavin, 2009). Cooperative approach is the learning model which emphasis that a group of students to learn together to optimize the learning environment and reach the learning goals. Darmuki and his colleagues (2017: p. 45) in their paper pointed out the elements of cooperative learning as: “(1) develop interaction which loves, educate, and foster each other as a life training in society; (2) positive interdependence; (3) individual responsibility; (4) face to face in learning process; (5) inter-group-member interaction; (6) evaluation on learning process through group.” An experiment done in three universities showed that all the lectures got involved in the study reported positive result of the application of cooperative approach in public speaking class. The result of the study confirmed the effectiveness of implementation of cooperative approach in learning speaking skills in university.

Luoma (2004) claimed that to develop the ability of speak in some other language is a challenging task and will take rather long lime to reveal the improvement. Ellis (2003: pp. 9-10) proposed six essential features of tasks: “1. A task is a work-plan. 2. Meaning is the primary focal point of the task in hand. 3. It involves real-life use of language. 4. Any of the four language skills can get involved. 5. Intermingles cognitive processes 6. It has a fixed communicative result.” In 2017 Khoshshima and Shokri carried out a study to identify the usage of task-based approach in improving students speaking ability. The findings proved that task-based approach can facilitate students' performance in oral presentation and provide more chances for the students to engage in the activities. Stu-

dents who took part in tasks tended to show more progress in their speaking skills and more confident when delivering their speech.

3. Method

3.1. Description of the Course and Participants

English Public Speaking is a compulsory course of second year English majors. The course is a combination of language skills and professional English knowledge. It enables students to transit from the mere language knowledge acquisition to the diversified and multiple language skills application in practice. This course helps to improve students' abilities to apply English comprehensively and contribute to the cultivation of students' integrated quality. It is a novel course of English teaching reformation. Public speaking course not only helps students to further improve their oral English presentation skills, what's more it is conducive to students to develop ideas, master communication skills and guide students to understand the charm of speech, improve their speech delivering skills. This course can help them to grasp the skill of public speaking and applied it into communication in different fields. This course requires a certain degree of accumulation of knowledge beyond language skills. Through this course, students can systematically understand the skills of English public speaking, the method of writing English speech and the role of English public speaking skills in modern communication.

The participants are from one of a middle-class university in Hebei Province in China the mainland. All the 30 students who took part in the course are sophomore, English major students with age of 20 - 22, who are learning English in a mixed gender intact class. The students are Chinese monolingual students learning English as a foreign language. Most of the students got 110 - 145 marks in the College Entrance Examination (full mark 150), and all of them had taken the oral English in CEE with score higher than 130 (full mark 150). In the first year of university they had taken the course of speaking for two semesters, which aimed at equipping the students with basic genre knowledge about daily communication. In the second academic year they are required to learn public speaking for different purpose for two semesters.

3.2. Purpose of Teaching

After the learning in the first semester, students are required to know: how to do various introductory speeches; how to make the necessary preparations for different topics, and how to properly handle anxiety in delivering public speech. The students also need to acquire how to analyze the audience, understand the structure and strategy of the basic speech writing, create consensus with the central idea of speech according to different themes, use multimedia tools to assist in the informative speech skillfully (teaching plan see the Appendix).

In the second semester, based on the knowledge and skills learnt in the first semester, the teacher will increase the difficulty to elaborate on how to deal with

persuasive speech and impromptu speech, guide the students to discuss and express their views on some public topics, improve the students' ability to think in the course of speech training, establish a proper view and value of the world, reasonably organize their own language, explain their own ideas on some general issues in English. Training of impromptu speech skills in the second half of the semester aims to prepare the students for emergent situations in their real life.

3.3. Introduction of the Course Book

The Art of Public Speaking has been published 30 times in the world since its first publication in 1983 and has been republished 10 times worldwide. Nearly 10 million copies have been issued all over the world. *The Art of Public Speaking* is a recommended textbook for college English public speaking course and university general education course, and is a necessary reference book for learners to participate in English public speaking competitions. Prof. Stephen E. Lucas author of the book is an international authority scholar in the field of public speaking, as well as a practitioner of speech and communication arts, with outstanding academic achievements. This China edition is tailor-made for Chinese English public speaking learners, not only retains the essence of the original book, but also incorporates Chinese characteristics, which is more practical and applicable.

The Teacher's Manual for the Art of Public Speaking (Lucas & Suya, 2011) mainly cooperates with *The Art of Speech* (China edition) for teacher's design and organization of classroom teaching. It can also be used in the general classroom of English public speaking and in other languages' rhetorical courses. This book has the following characteristics: Visual process of classroom activities, detailed description of the activities including specific steps and time allocation; equipped with exemplary teaching materials such as PPT, video and more; involves all the topics of English speech, activities and diverse styles to meet the different needs of teachers and students. All the original materials of the activities are from front-line teachers in China and the United States colleges and universities, there are many domestic teachers involved in the preparation, sharing activities design, teaching experience. Groundbreaking this book included the concept of "flipped classroom" to explore the new teaching mode of the Internet age.

3.4. Framework for Teaching

In speaking classroom teachers should have the basic role of setting up effective interaction in classroom. They should serve several crucial factors like attractive personality, systematic knowledge of the subject, classroom arrangement, speaking ability and open minded. Brown (2001: p. 54-56) in his paper raised five principles in teaching speaking: "1) Be aware of the differences between second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) learning context. 2) Give students practice with both fluency and accuracy. 3) Provide opportunities for stu-

dents to talk by using group work or pair work, and limiting teacher talk. 4) Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning. 5) Design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking.”

I designed an integrated class (90 mins) to elaborate on how to compose the beginning and ending part of a speech based on Chapter 8 of *The Art of Public Speaking*. In the teaching design I combined NLP, task-based approach and cooperative approach together attempted to explore a more productive and effective teaching process in public speaking instruction. I tended to improve students’ cultural awareness, innovative spirit and critical thinking through the effective guidance and all kinds of inspiration and thinking tasks. I shall explain some parts in detail afterward.

Teaching design		
Department: <u>Foreign Language Department</u>		Subject: <u>English Public Speaking</u>
Grade: <u>2</u> Lecturer’s name		
Chapter 8 Beginning and Ending the Speech	Length	90 minutes
Concept of design	Implementing task-based teaching approach in classroom, highlighting the comprehensive training of students’ listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through cooperative group work. Trying to activate the students attitude and reduce the fear and anxiety of delivering speech in front of a group of audience with the help of NLP.	
Learning content analysis	This chapter mainly focuses on the writing features and methods of how to work with the beginning and ending part of English speech. During the lectures, it is necessary to arrange corresponding group activities to guide students to familiarize themselves with the structure of the beginning and the end of English speech and achieve these two parts successfully.	
Learner analysis	General characteristics	Most of the students in this class are active, they are able to actively participate in the activities arranged by the teacher. The problems existed here are the lack of leading members in the group and the low productivity in group activity.
	Initial ability	Students in this class are mixed-ability, unevenly distributed and have large individual differences.
	Curriculum standards	The English Public Speaking course is a compulsory course of sophomore English majors. The course is a combination of language skills and professional knowledge. This course helps to improve students’ ability to apply English comprehensively. Through the study of this course, students can not only further improve their English skills and oral communicative competence, but also help students to develop their critical thinking and communication skills. This course requires amount of knowledge beyond language skills. Through this course, students can systematically understand the skills of presenting English public speech, the method of writing English speech.
Teaching objectives	Knowledge and Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to understand the role of beginning and end part in English speech. 2. to understand the seven main ways to write the beginning part of English speech. 3. to identify the features of different types of beginning part writing. 4. to understand the several methods of writing the ending part. 5. to require the students to complete the writing of the beginning and ending part on selected topic.
	Process and method	This chapter includes two parts of content, using multimedia teaching and interactive teaching. The first part includes the teaching of theory, the method of combining demonstration video observation and interpretation of theoretical knowledge points; the second part includes the grouping of students assisted by classroom discussions and student exercises and evaluation by teachers and students (including self-assessment, peer review and teacher Comments are combined.)

Continued

Teaching focus, difficulty and solution	This chapter elaborates on the difficulties of writing the beginning and ending part of speech. To solve this difficulty, during the teaching process, teacher will demonstrate various examples to students in detail through multimedia devices, vividly explain the various writing styles of the beginning and end part of the presentation, so as to enable students to understand the features and structure of these two parts and gain profound understanding of writing methods. And guide the students to write their own beginning and ending part for certain topic successfully through the group activities. Cooperative learning can exercise students' cooperation spirit, and to a certain extent, reduce the difficulty of writing, improve students' interest in learning, is conducive to learning in-depth. Organizing presentations in class can increase students' chances of practice and reduce student stress. According to NLP the evaluation and feedback phase can stimulate students' reflection on their performance and benefit from it.			
Teaching environment	Multimedia Classroom			
Teaching process				
Teaching session	Teaching content	Time cost	Teacher activities	Student Activities
Knowledge teaching	Usage of introduction part in public speaking	25 mins	Use PPT and video examples to introduce 7 typical methods of how to write an effective beginning part of a speech.	According to the instruction of teacher and audio-visual demonstration, students discuss within groups to figure out the characteristics of different beginning part writing types and the appropriate topic and situation the writing styles can be applied.
Skill practice	Presentation	40 mins	Students are required to write an introduction part of a speech on the two topics provided by teacher. Students need to discuss with other participants in the same group, select a suitable method of writing from the 7 types of writing introduction, and complete the introduction within a hundred words in 25 minutes. Other group need to provide comments and feedback to all the other groups.	Students start with a group discussion at the beginning and writing the introduction with collaborative work, after writing every group would present their introduction in front of the whole class. While one group presenting on the platform, other groups listen carefully and give reflection and suggestion afterward.
Knowledge teaching	The Conclusion	25 mins	Use PPT and video to show students the function of ending part and how to write an effective ending.	According to the elaboration of teacher, students learn the characteristics of different types of ending part writing and the appropriate topics they can be applied.
	Learning target			Practice and assessment
Teaching Evaluation	Through teaching and group practice on relevant tasks to enhance students' understanding of the beginning and ending part of English speech, and let students practice these two parts of the writing			Require students to complete writing of beginning part Through group work, and present the outcome in front of the class. In the evaluation session, enable students to give and receive valuable feedback. After explaining the method of writing the ending part, arranging assignments for the students to write the ending part after class.

3.5. Teaching Design of Chapter 8

In the teaching design I tried to combine several useful teaching methods to scaffold students' learning. Thornbury (2001: p. 112) suggested some stages for a good teacher to make a well-designed task-based teaching plan as follow: "(1) integrate speaking activity in the curriculum, (2) organize speaking activity in the syllabus, (3) have class discussion, (4) assess speaking activity, (5) give criteria of

speaking.” In my teaching plan I organized group discussion for the students to explore the proper situation to use different writing types of the introduction part and ask students to create their own introduction according to different topics. After they finished the task, I assessed their performance through providing comments and peer feedback expected the students to sharpen their understanding of the features and structures of these two important parts in speech writing.

Another critical issue should be considered is how to group the students. Based on the cooperative approach, Darmuki (2017) suggested that first the students in one group should work together to fulfill the learning task. Second each group should contain students of blended abilities. Third, the group should consist with mixed gender, culture and race. Forth, evaluation should focus on both group and individual achievement.

With an interview and written feedback report after a year instruction and learning in English public speaking course based on this integrated model, most of the students (more than 82%) report self-estimated progress in both their public speaking skills and spoken English proficiency. What’s more students (75%) also express their preference for the new teaching model in terms of improving their confidence and reducing speaking anxiety. We also collected qualitative data through interview and written report from the two teachers who taught the course for one year and find a positive correlation between the ideas from the students and the teachers. Both teachers reported observable improvement in most of students speaking proficiency in English and public speaking skills.

4. Conclusion

English Public speaking skill is considered to be one of the important qualities to illustrate students’ holistic competence of English. Some well-known western universities tend to make public speaking as one of the compulsory courses for all students and often gave top priority to communication and public speaking skills in emphasizing the comprehensive qualities that students must possess. English public speaking course not only can foster students’ English development but also cultivate learners critical thinking.

Critical thinking is manifested as the ability to make purposive and rational judgments on things or opinions according to the standards (Wen, 2012). Critical thinking is one of the basic qualities for modern citizens. More and more universities in China begin to implement public speaking in higher education to enhance the development of independent critical thinking. In addition, in the specific language learning activities, which language skills can reflect the ability of speculation, how to scientifically evaluate the level of speculation of learners, and how to evaluate the teaching level of speculative ability training are still the hot topics of researchers.

The essence of college education lies in improving the overall quality of college students. This research of integrated teaching model of English public

speaking in university and the implementation of corresponding courses can train students to express their critical views and ideas in fluent English, and promote their overall quality improvement and achieve the development of English.

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