



Necessity of Applying Cohesive Devices in College Listening EFL Teaching

FU Chunxia^{[a],*}

^[a]Faculty of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, Jingzhou, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Cohesion Theory of Halliday and Hasan is widely applied in different subjects of EFL teaching, particularly in reading comprehension, writing and translation practice. However, It is not very often applied in college listening to EFL teaching. As grammar and vocabulary have often been laid great importance in listening comprehension, Cohesion Theory which involves grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion can also be applied in college listening to EFL teaching with great efficiency. Listening materials can be understood much better by applying the cohesive devices. Therefore, it is necessary to apply cohesive devices in college listening to EFL teaching. Its necessity is supported by the current situation of college English EFL listening teaching and the questionnaire results, with the expectation that both the teachers and students will benefit a lot from this application. On the one hand, the teachers will improve the teaching efficiency of listening classes. On the other hand, the students' listening abilities will be improved with the cohesive devices.

Key words: Cohesive device; College English; EFL teaching; Listening

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INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is not just an important skill in daily life, but it is also one of the teaching courses

in current national college English teaching syllabus in China. Because of the innovation of college English teaching, listening is playing an increasingly important role. At the same time, it is also an indispensable element of English tests. In recent years, listening and speaking in SLA have been paid more attention. More and more college students put much more time and energy on English listening. But the result seems far from satisfactory. Therefore, it is high time that we try other approaches, and applying cohesive devices in college listening to EFL teaching may be the right way. The current situation of college English EFL listening teaching and the questionnaire results are stated for the necessity.

1. CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH EFL LISTENING TEACHING

Although all the teachers have noticed the significance of listening competence in English learning and teaching in China, it is really not an easy job to help students develop their listening abilities. In order to improve the teachers' teaching efficiency and students' listening abilities, a lot of domestic researches on the current situation of college English listening teaching has been carried out. These studies are mainly about the analysis of the main reasons for low efficiency in college English listening teaching in China and the exploration of the methods to improve college students' listening abilities.

Due to the deeply-rooted education which pays more attention to exams, grammar and score but not the communicative capacity of learners in foreign language teaching. Thus, the current situation of teaching of listening is not satisfactory.

There are usually three aspects which should be responsible for the poor quality of listening teaching: the aspect from students, the aspect from teachers and the

aspects from the colleges. On the one hand, students don't think listening is very important, they do not have much interest in listening, and their poor English knowledge may also be an obstacle for listening comprehension. As for the teachers, in the process of college English listening teaching, teachers often carry out listening teaching in the form of tests. They play the listening recordings and the students finish the comprehension exercises, then the teachers give feedback on how many "right" answers the students get. This teaching method is always the same, which makes the listening class boring and the students are performing passively. Some teachers usually begin a listening class with a brief learning of some new words and background information which are related to the corresponding listening text. They then play the audio files, asking students to listen carefully and finish some exercises. After the students complete the exercises, these teachers will check the answers and play the audio files once again to check the answers. This kind of lessons only provides students with listening practice rather than teaching listening skills or strategies. The result is that many students will not understand the listening materials very well because they are tired of new words, unfamiliar and strange sounds.

Under such circumstances, the students can easily become bored and tired because they do not have the interest and motivation for listening. Gradually, they will not be motivated and become the passive receivers in such a class. What's worse, the students may have bad and useless listening habits. Consequently, they are more likely to suffer the same failure during listening comprehension. This will make them helpless and depressed, which has a bad influence on their language learning, especially listening. In addition, there is not enough class time for listening in some colleges, which can not ensure the sufficient time for listening teaching and practicing.

In traditional college English listening lessons, teachers are likely to focus on the achievement of listening, rather than listening itself. They emphasize more on the results rather than the listening process, and the achievement in listening is often measured by correct answers to the questions. If a student supplies a correct answer, then it is almost unnecessary to explain how that

answer has been got. Such a listening teaching approach is more like listening tests rather than teaching how to listen and how to deal with the students' listening problems. Consequently, wrong answers can be considered to be more important than correct ones. Thus, the traditional listening teaching approach will keep the students from getting the improvement of listening comprehension skills at a higher level.

The current situation of college English listening is far from satisfactory. The fact that the present listening teaching needs to be reformed is quite urgent and necessary. For how to promote college English listening teaching, the researchers have also made a lot of exploration. The methods of stimulating learners' listening interest, enhancing their basic language skills and combing writing with listening are mentioned. Applying the Input and Output Language Theory to English listening teaching course is also proposed.

As is stated above, we can infer that the application of cohesion devices in the listening teaching processes is seldom recommended. So applying cohesion devices to college English listening teaching is a relatively new attempt.

2. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRES

In order to get the effective results and know about the students' familiarity of the cohesive devices, the questionnaire is designed exactly on the basis of the research purpose and the targeted subjects are students from two classes in the college. The purposes of the questionnaire are to know the current situation of college students' English listening comprehension as well as their understanding of cohesive devices in the process of listening comprehension. The analysis is stated in the following tables.

There are ten questions in the questionnaire, some are about students' interests in English listening comprehension and their views on the importance of English listening comprehension. Some are about their understanding of cohesion theory and cohesive devices in listening comprehension.

Table 1
Responses of Students to English Learning

Item	Choice			
	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D
Q1	22%	65%	8%	5%
Q2	43%	52%	5%	0%

Question One is about the students' interest in English learning, according to the data, 65% of the students have

the interest of learning English, and 22% of them have the very strong interest of English learning. There are a few

students who don't like studying English but they have to learn it in the college. Question Two is about their opinions on the importance of English. A majority of students think that English is important, especially 43% of them hold the view that English is very important. This data suggests that over half of the students have

the interest of English and they believe that English is important. Since most students think English is of great importance, it is very necessary for them to study English hard. The teachers should apply more methods in English courses and making the courses more interesting.

Table 2
Responses of Students to English Listening Comprehension

Item	Choice			
	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D
Q3	22%	61%	17%	0%
Q4	57%	39%	4%	0%
Q10	50%	45%	5%	0%

Question Three is about the students' interests in English listening comprehension. Despite the fact that most students have the interest of listening, there is still 17% of the students who have no interest in listening comprehension. Question Four is about their opinions on the importance of English listening comprehension. Over half of the students think that it is very important. Question Ten is about their concern of listening

comprehension in College English Test Band 4 (hereafter shorted CET 4), 95% of them are concerned about the listening test in CET 4, and only 5% of the students don't worry about the test. This data suggests that most students think that listening comprehension is very important. However, most of them are concerned about the listening test in CET 4, they need to improve their listening abilities.

Table 3
Responses of Students to Cohesion in Listening Comprehension

Item	Choice			
	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D
Q5	0%	0%	34%	66%
Q6	0%	9%	91%	0%
Q7	0%	22%	78%	0%
Q8	39%	61%	0%	0%
Q9	13%	61%	13%	13%

These questions are all about the students' understanding of cohesion in listening comprehension. Question Five is about their understanding of Cohsion Theory, 66% of them know nothing about this theory and no one knows well about it. From the responses of Question Six and Question Seven, most students know little about the cohesive relations. From their choices to Question Eight and Question Nine, 39% of them think it's necessary to use the cohesive devices, but almost one third of them seldom or never use the cohesive devices. This table suggests that there is a high need of Cohesion Theory and cohesive devices to be taught and applied in listening comprehension.

3. NECESSITY OF APPLYING COHESIVE DEVICES

The national college English teaching syllabus has been revised twice to guide the English language teaching and leaning in the universities so as to meet the needs of nationwide English proficiency. Listening and speaking abilities are paid more attention in the last College English Curriculum Requirements.

For many years, linguistic forms and descriptions of the structure of language have been analyzed basically from the syntactic level in linguistic research. Influenced by this, English teachers help students with the grammar

learning in their listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating practice. In fact, grammar is not the most effective factor which affects students' listening comprehension. Due to such method, students can only understand the meaning of words and sentences, they cannot figure out the relations between sentences as well as the context meaning. Thus, their listening abilities are not been improved so quickly, and English as a Foreign Language teaching and learning are far more unsatisfactory, particularly in college English listening teaching. The approach of analysing cohesive devices can be useful for the understanding of the relations between sentences and the context meaning, thus for the listening comprehension.

Since cohesion can be systematized into grammatical and lexical cohesion according to Halliday and Hasan, there are grammatical and lexical cohesion devices correspondingly. Grammatical cohesion consists of four kinds of cohesive devices which are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. These devices will form cohesion in a text. When the interpretation of one element in one sentence is indispensable to that of another in a different sentence, cohesion then appears. The awareness of this knowledge can make the English learners get logical understanding of the texts no matter in reading materials or in listening materials. Lexical cohesion is a way to set up the cohesion in a text by using the same presupposed word or related words, to express a sense of integration in text. In other words, it occurs through the selection of elements which are related to those that have been mentioned before. It is about the connections based on the use of words in a context. There are two types of lexical cohesion: reiteration and collocation. In fact, reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, reiteration and collocation appear frequently in the listening materials, if the students are very familiar with these cohesive devices, they can easily understand the meaning of the materials, and their listening abilities can also be improved with much practice.

CONCLUSION

Due to the situations that the students know less about cohesion and cohesive devices, the teachers should teach these in their English teaching. These cohesive devices are very important for text understanding, so as for the listening materials understanding, it is very necessary to apply these devices in college listening EFL teaching. For the courses of listening teaching, teachers should first have an entire understanding of the knowledge of cohesion theory and the relevant method of teaching. Not only should they know well about textual cohesion but they should also be able to teach the students detailed information on using cohesive devices. While listening, students should make sure that this knowledge can be fundamental to listen comprehension. It should be laid great importance that cohesive devices play an important part in the processing of listening comprehension.

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