

# **A Survey on the Autonomous Listening Learning of Non-English majors**

Dongmei Xue

Guangdong University of Science & Technology, Guangdong, 523083, China

1792077984@qq.com

## **Abstract**

**In the light of shortening class time of College English, it is urgent to strengthen the autonomous listening learning after class. A survey was conducted to learn about the current learning situation of autonomous learning. Based on the analysis of data collected, three corresponding measures are recommended to provide reference for teachers.**

## **Keywords**

**listening; autonomous learning; motivation, learning strategy.**

## **1. Introduction**

College English Curriculum Requirements issued by General Office of the Ministry of Education in 2007 pointed out that the goal of College English teaching is to cultivate students' comprehensive English application ability, especially listening and speaking ability, so that they can communicate effectively in English in their future study, work and social communication, and at the same time, enhance their autonomous learning ability and improve their comprehensive cultural literacy to meet the needs of social development and international communication in China. College English Curriculum Requirements issued in 2017 also strengthened the importance of the comprehensive application and communication ability and cultivation of autonomous learning. Both the official requirements for undergraduate college English teaching are set at three levels, i.e. basic requirements, intermediate requirements and advanced requirements. Non-English majors are required to attain to one of the three levels of requirements. Basic requirements: students should be able to follow classroom instructions, everyday conversations, and lectures on general topics conducted in English. They should be able to understand English radio and TV programs spoken at a speed of about 130 to 150 words per minute grasping the main ideas and key points. They are expected to be able to employ basic listening strategies to facilitate comprehension. The college I am working is a private second-tier college, so teaching task in the college is to meet the basic requirements. To pass CET-4 or CET-6 is a big challenge for the students in the college. Listening, accounting for 35% scores in the CET-4, plays an important role in passing it. In September 2019, our college adopted the teaching reform of reducing College English class time, and the original four class hours per week for sophomores were reduced to two. Therefore, how to supervise college students' autonomous learning after class is a very prominent problem.

## **2. Data Collection**

The author conducted a survey on the autonomous listening learning of non-English Majors after class. The survey includes the following aspects: students' attitude towards English listening and autonomous listening learning, the time, methods and channels of autonomous listening learning, as well as the listening materials and learning methods they are interested in. Among all the data collected, 447 questionnaires are valid and effective. Among 447 students

participated, male students account for 47.87%, female students 52.13%. The participants are from the different departments of our college: 29.98% from the Department of Finance and Economics; 31.99% Department of Management; 12.53% Department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering; 21.03% Department of Computer; 4.47% Department of Art and Design. The number of freshmen is 51.01%; the number of sophomores is 48.99%. The English proficiency of 87.25% participants is below the required listening ability of CET 4, according to the data collected by the question concerning the self-evaluation about their listening proficiency, which is true of the overall situation of our college. Less than 30% of the students in the college can pass CET 4, based on the accumulated number of all the tests taken part in two years' English learning.

### **3. Analysis of Autonomous Listening Learning**

#### **3.1. The Attitude Toward Autonomous Listening Learning**

It is found that 64.43% students have a little bit interest in listening; only 14.54% are quite interested in listening. 48.32% attach great importance to listening in learning English; 41.83% deem that listening is important. Meanwhile, 76.11% feel that they encounter the difficulties in learning listening; 30.43% show that they meet small obstacles; during the learning process, 26.85% have been experiencing frustration all the time; 40.04% think they often have the sense of frustration; 33.11% seldom have the frustrated feelings. 73.38% believe that exercises in class and after class are necessary. It can be seen that students do not realize the significance of listening in learning English; do not have strong motivation in learning listening, and a large percentage of students experienced frustrations in learning listening; while they know that autonomous listening learning after class are indispensable.

#### **3.2. The Present Learning Situation of Autonomous Listening**

22.82% have the specific training plan to improve listening; while 77.18% do not make any plan for listening. Only 2.47% spend more than 6 hours on listening each; 6.94% pay 3-6 hours for listening; 41.39% devote 1-3 hours; 49.22% do not do any listening exercises. Most of students have no plan for exercise listening and nearly half the students do not listen to English after class. The time they are willing to spend on listening each day vary from student to student.

45.19% like to learn listening about 10-15 minutes, 44.07% tend to spend 16-30 minutes; about 10% are willing to spend more than half an hour. 81.88% think they have the short plan to prepare for the final test or CET 4 or CET 6. It shows that about 90% like to spend less than 30 minutes each day, but in order to prepare for CET-4 or CET-6 they will make the plan to do exercises. It can be seen that CET-4 or CET-6 has the huge influence on students' learning and most of students do not want to spend more than half an hour on listening learning.

#### **3.3. The Reason for the Present Autonomous Listening Learning**

93.96% attribute the obstacles to listening to vocabulary shortage; 84.12% reckon that speaking speed and intonation are elements that preclude from following. So, vocabulary and speed and intonation of speaking are the main obstacles for listening learning. For failing in autonomous learning, 85% are due to difficulties to stick to learning; 76.51% due to the high degree of difficulty in learning listening; 63.31% due to the poor and slow learning efficiency. Vocabulary shortage, fast speaking speed, unfamiliar intonation of English, poor learning efficiency are the factors related with listening itself; lack of self-discipline is the reason concerning students themselves.

#### **3.4. The Methods and Materials Students are Interested in**

As to the methods to improve listening, 83.45% choose watching the American or British TV series or movies, talk shows or famous people's speech; 73.6% listening to the English songs;

66.22% reading English articles; 60.18% dictating the suitable listening materials; 57% practicing the loads of CET-4 or CET-6 papers. For the channels to listening, 85.01% select the APPs on the phone; 68.23% listening tests; 61.3% practicing in class; 59.73% viewing or listening to the English news or programs. For the materials they like to take, 74.27% like the entertainment; 52.8% choose speeches; 49.89% articles about humanities and sciences; 46.53% news and radios; 42% the materials related with their majors. It can be found that entertainments including movies, TV Series, and songs are the favorable content, and speeches, articles, news and radios are all the good resources that students are comparatively interested in; students have the pressure to pass CET-4 or CET-6, illustrated by the choices of doing the CET-4 or CET-6 papers; the channels they like most is APPs.

### 3.5. Strategies Employed in the Listening Learning

Among the listening strategies, 54% know to skim the choices before listening; 51.23% can infer the questions in the light of choices; 46.31% can focus on relatives, for example, the transition words; 36.91% admit that they have know some strategies but they find the strategies play a minor role in listening. For the material listened, 61.3% put them away without reviewing ; 38.7% do some summary and reviewing. 75.39% expect teachers to teach more listening strategies and theories and conduct the targeted exercise; 73.83% expect teachers to recommend the online learning platform, assign the autonomous learning tasks after class; 50.78% organize students to supervise each other and build the mutual assistance system. It shows that about half of students know the strategies of prediction and inference but no more strategies, have the vague realization about the strategies; while they hope that teachers can teach more about listening strategies, at the same time assign more autonomous learning after class, strengthen the monitoring and develop the mutual assistance system between students. To sum up, students do not have clear-cut realization about importance of listening in English and autonomous listening learning; Most of students have no plan for exercise listening, nearly half of students do not conduct listening practice after class; much of the motivation of learning listening comes from CET-4 or CET-6; entertainments including movies, TV Series, and songs are the favorable content, and speeches, articles, news and radios are the second favorable ; APPs are the channels they like most; students know some basic listening strategies therefore they hope they can learn them from the class; students are deficient in controlling themselves and they expect teachers can strengthen the supervision about the autonomous learning and develop the mutual assistance system between students.

## 4. Measures to be Taken to Improve the Autonomous Listening Learning

It is no exaggeration that the autonomous listening learning in the college is overwhelmingly negative. It also shows something interesting: students know what they lack in learning listening, while they cannot find the strength to control themselves, so they expect to have supervision from teachers and classmates; the fact that entertainment is their favorite materials tell that students are not mature enough to understand the learning process, and they care much about the pleasure of learning and put the learning efficiency at the second priority. In the light of the above analysis, the following suggestions are recommended:

### 4.1. Improving the Awareness of Importance of Autonomous Listening Learning

The fact that students cannot keep on listening are partly owing to their vague realization about the significance of the autonomous learning. At the era of the society, the autonomous learning is necessary for everybody, because the world has offered the solid foundation for self-learning. All kinds of APPs provide all sorts of knowledge and trainings, and there are all sorts of websites delivering the methods or advices. Improving of listening lies in a lot of repeated practices,

which allows participants to finishing the exercises by themselves. Make the students clear this point to they may have firm determination to stick to autonomous listening learning.

#### **4.2. Strengthening Learning the Related Learning Theories and Listening Strategies**

Know more about the learning theories can make the students choose the scientific methods and materials to better the learning quality. Watching movies and TV series, listening to the song are good ways but not the main way to learn. To attain the same knowledge or abilities, it takes much longer through the entertainment than traditional reading and writing, especially in the environment of second language learning, in which students are surrounded by pure-Chinese language context. Listening takes time to achieve the improvements, so students should make psychological preparations for this point, and persistent in learning.

Students do not possess some scientific methods and strategies of learning. In class, teachers reinforce the strategies, do the related exercises, and provide the further advices on the after-class study. In this way, it can help students master the listening strategies at the same time to lessen the frustrations in learning process.

#### **4.3. Enhancing the Supervision of Autonomous Listening Learning and Building the Mutual Assistance System between Students**

Lack of self-discipline is a prominent problem for students, so supervision from teachers and classmates are urgent for autonomous learning. There are learning records on most Apps. The teacher can choose those APPs of which teacher can check the learning data through teachers' system. It is a recommended way to take a screen shot and punch on the Wechat group each day. Creating new ways to supervise students and building the wholesome atmosphere are the key to maintain the autonomous learning.

### **5. Conclusion**

Listening is of great significance in learning English, and to improve the autonomous listening learning is a top priority in the light of reducing the class hours of College English. Through the survey, it is found that the overall situation of the autonomous listening learning is not promising, and the three corresponding measures based on the analysis of the survey results: improving the awareness of importance of autonomous listening learning, strengthening learning the related learning theories and listening strategies, enhancing the supervision of autonomous listening learning and building the mutual assistance system between students are expected to provide reference for teachers and students.

### **References**

- [1] Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education. College English Teaching Requirements [Z]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2007.
- [2] Wang Shouren. Reflections on College English Teaching [J]. Foreign Language Teaching Theory and Practice, 2011 (1): 1-5.
- [3] Wen Qiufang. Shortening Teaching Cycle and Enhancing Teaching Density: A New Idea for College English Teaching Reform [J]. China Foreign Language Education, 2008 (3): 3-5.
- [4] Zhang Yanling, Zhang Qiuhui. Investigation and Analysis of English Listening Ability and Listening Strategies of Non-English Majors [J]. Vocational Education, 2007 (1): 221-232.