

Linguistic Features of Oral English Corpora and Their Implications for English Teaching in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: The main goal of English teaching in colleges and universities is to cultivate students' ability to use the language, but many students are still unable to complete oral communication fluently after years of study. For this reason, teachers need to deeply analyze and study the linguistic features of oral English corpora and formulate reasonable teaching strategies to improve students' oral expression skills. This paper outlines the linguistic features of oral English corpora, comparatively analyzes the differences between oral English corpora and written English corpora, and explores effective teaching strategies, hoping to provide guidelines for relevant teachers.

Keywords: Oral English corpora; Linguistic features; Colleges and universities; English teaching

Online publication: February 25, 2024

1. Introduction

Spoken English is a language system applied in the process of oral communication in English, and its language features are quite different from those of written English. At the present stage, English teaching in colleges and universities in China generally focuses on the teaching of written corpora and there are many defects in the teaching of oral corpora, and problems such as excessive oral expression and writing are prominent. In order to improve the quality of English teaching in colleges and universities and enhance students' oral communication skills, teachers need to study the linguistic features of oral English and formulate appropriate teaching strategies based on the relevant features.

2. Linguistic features of oral English corpora

2.1. Vocabulary characterization

Through the study of English movies, it can be found that the oral corpora frequently use intonation in the dialogues. In order to increase the interactivity and coherence of the language, most of the capitalized sentences use non-proprietary nouns and mix written and spoken language in the oral expression ^[1]. For example, in the

dialogues of a movie, the language of character P is “You are a musician, no.” The language of character M is “You see that woman was my great-great-grandmother, Mama Imelda. She died way before I was born.” The language of character Z is “You told that mouse the Pawpsicle sticks were red wood!” In these language expressions, character P and character M reinforce the expressions “are” and “way” in their tone of voice, respectively, and character Z’s expression of “Pawpsicle” belongs to the combination of “paw” and “popsicle,” which is in line with the scenario of the movie ^[2].

2.2. Sentence features

The expression of English sentence pattern is related to the language environment, and irregular sentence structure and incomplete sentences occur from time to time, and the omitted parts of the sentence pattern are mostly supplemented and completed by the context before and after, accent, intonation, facial expression, etc. ^[3]. For example, in English dialogues, character S expresses “You are? Why?” Character M answers “Because... What if people show up?” Dialogues use elliptical sentences to complete the expression, fully reflecting the color of the spoken language and the unique language style of the characters ^[4]. Sentence repetition is also an important sentence feature of spoken English, and its main role is to ensure the coherence of language expression, reflecting the speaker’s style of language expression, to avoid the loss of important information in the process of language transfer. For example, character M says “When do you leave? In the morning?” and character S replies “Yeah, 7:00. Boise.” Character M repeats “Boise” and character S replies “Boise.” In the process of repeating “Boise” several times during the conversation, the role of the listener and the speaker is changed, and the relevant semantics are accurately transmitted ^[5].

2.3. Part of speech features

The features of oral English corpora mainly include informative corpora and infective corpora, which differ in their communicative purposes. Informative corpora focus on expressing and transmitting all kinds of information, the structure of the utterance is long and complex, and there are more nouns in the language, favoring formality. Inffective corpora focus on expressing emotions, attracting others’ attention, and constructing and maintaining good communicative relationships, so they use exaggerated and vague language in their sentences, and adverbs and words of fiction are used more often. English movie dialogues mostly use infective utterances, the characterization of language is prominent, and exaggerated language and emphatic adverbs are mostly used ^[6]. For example, in a movie, D: “Bunnies do not do that.” M: “Never.” D: “You know what? Pretty much all predators. You liar.” In the process of the above expression, the hyperbolic language “Pretty much all” and the emphatic adverb “Never” is used to reflect the character and attitude of the characters, and the use of “You liar” reduces the degree of formality of the utterance.

3. The differences between oral and written English corpora

In the authors’ opinion, the differences between oral English corpora and written corpora are as follows. The first difference is in the components. Spoken English is transmitted through sound, characterized by transience and dynamics, and limited by time and space in the process of transmission. Written corpora are transmitted through words, characterized by permanence and staticity, with no time and space limitations. Secondly, there is the difference in expression. Oral corpora of spoken language are mostly used in colloquial words, hiatus, buzzwords, slang, phrasal verbs, etc., to complete the expression, the language is easy to understand and has vivid images. Written corpora mostly use formal language, tone words, and fuzzy words, the language expression is more formal, using more “big words” and technical terms. The semantics are precise and single,

with no obvious emotional color, and do not need to be accurately understood through the context. Thirdly, there are sentence structure differences ^[7]. Oral English corpora mostly use simple statements, often with incomplete structure, while written corpora mostly use compound statements and parallel sentences, with complete sentences and close logical relationships. Oral corpora mostly use personal pronouns as the main subject, while written corpora use non-personal pronouns as the main subject. The oral English corpora prioritize the description of the main information, and the written corpora describe the main information last. The last difference is contextual differences. Oral English corpora require a specific context, and the language is more implicit ^[8]. Written corpora do not need contextual support to complete the expression, and the language is relatively direct. In the process of oral expression, facial expressions, gestures, intonation, tone of voice, and other information can be used to assist expression, while written corpora are mainly used to complete the expression through rhetoric, sentence pattern, and other ways.

4. The implications of oral English corpora linguistic features for English teaching in colleges and universities

4.1. Providing students with sufficient cross-cultural communication materials

According to relevant experts, language communicative competence mainly includes sociolinguistic competence, grammatical competence, strategic competence, discourse competence, etc. Our students have strong grammatical competence, but their sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence are seriously insufficient. For this reason, in the process of teaching English in colleges and universities, it is necessary to provide students with sufficient cross-cultural communication materials and help them master the characteristics of the oral English corpora, so as to promote the overall improvement of students' language expression skills ^[9]. English movie dialogues contain many characteristic colloquial expressions, such as using "Guys" to express "Dad," using "moron" to express a stupid person, using "weirdo" or "freak" to express a strange person, using "heck" to express "hell," using "bunny" to express "rabbit," using "nope" to express "no," etc. Teachers can collect and organize relevant materials to help students master the characteristics of English colloquial expressions in order to promote the improvement of students' language expression skills ^[9]; to make students understand the meanings of special vocabulary in the English language environment and master the characteristics of English oral expressions, so as to improve students' ability to use the language and articulation. Students also need to establish a sense of active learning and discover how to master the characteristics of spoken English during practice, to avoid errors in the process of cross-cultural communication to the greatest extent possible ^[10].

4.2. Enhancing students' sensitivity to registers

Linguistic research believes that style, purpose, and register are contextual factors that determine language features, and register mainly refers to the environment in which linguistic communication takes place, including the two parties of the conversation and the topics they discuss, as well as the whole process of the conversation. The purpose of the language mainly refers to the role relationship and social status of the two parties to the dialog ^[11]. Discourse style refers to the medium and channel of language communication and the rhetorical methods used. Teachers need to take the above theories as the basis in the process of teaching English in colleges and universities, guide students to analyze and study the characteristics of dialogues in English movies and learn appropriate topics for oral communication, help students to analyze how to complete the linguistic articulation in the process of discussing the topics, how to carry out the dialogues, correct the dialogues, and end the dialogues, so as to enable students to master the correct strategies of oral communication. In the process

of English teaching, teachers need to create a relatively authentic language environment for students, guide students to imitate and practice repeatedly, and continuously improve their sensitivity to the language domain, so as to improve students' cross-cultural communicative competence ^[12].

4.3. Proper handling of the relationship between the written and spoken languages

In learning the mother tongue, the spoken language takes the first place. In learning English, due to the lack of language environment and other factors, students need to read all kinds of learning materials to master the pronunciation of words, so the written body occupies the primary position. In the process of teaching English in colleges and universities, teachers need to deal with the relationship between the written corpora and the oral corpora, instruct students to master the core content of word formation and organization through the study of the written corpora, and strengthen the teaching of the oral corpora, so as to improve students' listening and speaking skills ^[13]. At the same time, language expression is a kind of habit, so teachers need to instruct students to memorize and recite more in the process of daily learning, and to form the thinking stereotype of the oral English corpora through repeated practice, so as to promote the comprehensive improvement of oral expression skills. In the process of teaching English in colleges and universities, teachers need to help students establish English thinking habits, guide students to get rid of the interference of their own language in the process of English expression, and learn to complete the comprehension, judgment, and expression of information in English, so as to improve the accuracy and appropriateness of oral expression in English ^[14].

4.4. Instructing students to improve their oral expression in the process of conversation

In English teaching in colleges and universities, teachers need to combine the characteristics of the oral English corpora, choose dialogue-rich teaching materials for students, and appropriately reduce narrative stories and stories with strong literary colors, so that students can get sufficient opportunities for oral practice in the learning process. At the same time, teachers need to create a positive learning environment for students in the process of daily teaching, organize English communication activities, and train students' oral communication skills through daily English dialogues, English debates, English speeches, English interviews, seminars, and other forms. In addition, in the process of guiding students' dialogues, teachers need to ensure the correspondence, articulation, and continuity of the dialogues, reduce the attention to the structural integrity of the dialogues, the accuracy of the words used, and the completeness of the meaning of the expression, guide the students to freely express themselves, rectify the problem of the approximation of oral communication in English and the memorization of the text, so as to make the students understand the difference between the oral corpora and the written corpora of English, and then to improve the comprehensive competence of linguistic expression ^[15].

4.5. Instructing students to utilize auxiliary means to complete oral expression

It can be found through the analysis of the characteristics of the oral English corpora that the transfer of information between the talkers requires the support of intonation, expression, and gesture. Therefore, in the teaching process, teachers need to guide students to watch English movies, imitate the auxiliary means of expression, and encourage students to practice dialogues, requiring students to use intonation, facial expressions, and gestures appropriately in the process of practicing, so as to enhance students' cross-cultural communicative competence.

5. Conclusion

There are differences between oral English and written English, with obvious features in vocabulary, sentence pattern, discourse, etc. Teachers need to determine appropriate teaching strategies based on the features of oral

English in college English teaching in order to improve students' cross-cultural communicative competence and language expression skills.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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