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Observation and Analysis on Oral English Teaching Models of Native English Speaking Teachers for English Majors—A Case Study Based on the Comparison of Two Foreign Teachers

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Abstract

Oral English ability is essential for English majors. With the continuous expansion of the scope of international exchanges in China, more and more foreign English teachers participate in domestic oral English classroom teaching. The Models of Oral English Teaching have their characteristics and the analysis on them is inferential and suggestive. This paper mainly adopts questionnaire surveys and interviews to conduct a case study of two foreign teachers in two parallel classes of English majors, comparing similarities and differences in their teaching models including teaching principles, teaching objectives, and assessment methods. The results show that although the two foreign teachers differ in questioning, assignments, and teaching purposes, they adopt a student-centered teaching model. Furthermore, both of their teaching models need to accommodate the characteristics of Chinese students. Based on this, this paper recommends that it would be better if teachers of native English could improve their ways of communication and methods of questioning. In addition, it would be more suggestive that they could get a better understanding of the characteristics of learners. Meanwhile, Chinese students should also overcome nervousness and broaden practice channels.

Keywords: English majors; oral English classroom; Oral English Teaching Model; native English teachers; case study

1. Introduction

Since the Reform and Opening up, China's demand for English oral talents has increased. Many foreign teachers have entered colleges to undertake the task of oral English teaching.

They become an essential part of introducing foreign intelligence in colleges and universities and play an important role in talent training and teaching reform. However, there is less research at home and abroad that focuses on the comparative study of the teaching strategies and methods of native English teachers' classroom teaching in China. What's worse, there is little relevant research and discussion on how to improve the verbal English teaching of foreign teachers in Chinese classrooms and maximize their advantages in teaching.

Based on the comparison of the oral English teaching models from two foreign teachers, this paper conducts a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative study, via the research of questionnaire and interview, of two foreign teachers' participation in the oral English class of English majors in Hainan University. There are 70 students in total, respectively in two classes. The questionnaire tends to explore the factors affecting the interactions between the teacher and the learners, while the interview is to understand the teacher's teaching principles, objectives, evaluation standards as well as students' attitudes towards them. Thus, this paper hopes to further explore the oral classroom model of foreign teachers of English majors by collecting real data in English majors so as to further find out the advantages and disadvantages of the oral classroom teaching models of English majors plus practice-guiding based on the research findings, in addition to summarizing the experience of predecessors.

2. Literature Review

The Teaching Model is a long-time concept in education that is defined as an approach or paradigm that comprises a series of contents related to teaching. The core terms of the Teaching Model include the task-based teaching method and the student-centered method. When the teaching model is applied to oral language teaching, it develops its models such as Oral English Teaching Model and other language-training models. The following passages briefly review the relevant concepts.

2.1. Definition of "Teaching Model"

When we discuss the Teaching Model, we first make it connected with a model of teaching. Joyce et al defines a model of teaching as "a way of building a nurturer and stimulating ecosystem within which the students learn by interacting with its components. Various models pull students to learn by interacting with their components. Various models pull students into particular types of content (knowledge, values, skills) and increase their competence to grow in the personal, social, and academic domains." (Joyce et al, 2015: 5) Under such circumstances, a teaching model can be regarded as a fixed paradigm or plans for courses composing the curricula, teaching designs, teaching material, classroom activities, and assignments.

Teaching Model is actually an assembled concept that is made up of a repertoire of teaching modes. Normally, as Joyce et al states, "teaching is not a one-dimensional operation. Rather, teaching reaches toward different students and across disciplines, responsible for a panoply of standards that require corresponding sets of teaching strategies and ways of reaching students." (Joyce et al, 2015: xvii)

Teaching models comprehensively include the following essential elements: the rationales of teaching, the theories of teaching, teaching objectives, operating procedures, roles of teachers and students, teaching strategies, and teaching evaluation. In a broad sense, a teaching model can be defined as a stable teaching activity framework and system under a certain ideology or teaching theory. As a structural framework, it highlights the teaching model from the macro level. It also grasps the overall teaching activities and internal relationships and functions among the various teaching elements. As a systematic procedure, it emphasizes the process and operation of a teaching model (Wu, 1997: 12). The two basic teaching models are the "task-based teaching model" and the "student-centered teaching model". This paper analyzes teaching models in a sense of these two classic models.

The "Task-based" Teaching Model emerged in the 1980s, based on the theory of constructivism, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The Task-based Teaching Model breaks the traditional passive teaching method, advocates the teaching concept of "student-oriented teaching activities", and constantly emphasizes the dominant position of students in the teaching model. It is suggested that teachers should play the role of "instructor" in the teaching process, so as to enable students to "learn by doing". (Wei, 2020)

The "Student-Centered" Teaching Model emerged after the 1990s, emphasizing students as centers. This model highlights the initiative and enthusiasm of students in the learning process. The corresponding teaching design mainly focuses on "autonomous learning strategy" and "learning environment". Teachers and students not only assume the traditional roles of educators and learners respectively but also work together as researchers because teaching and research exploration are closely integrated into the teaching process. (Cao,2012) However, it often ignores the teacher's leading role because it emphasizes students' autonomous learning, which is easy to deviate from the requirements of teaching goals.

When the models of task-based and student-centered are applied to English Teaching, there is a wide range of repertoire worthwhile the researches. This paper addresses the oral English Teaching Model.

2.2 Study of Oral English Teaching at Home and Abroad

Since the 1980s, oral English teaching has attracted the attention of Western scholars. They generally believe that oral English teachers significantly influence oral English courses. As Joyce et al claim that "effective teaching is made up of a toolkit of ways to reach students and help them build their reservoir of knowledge, skills and enduring values." (Joyce et al, 2015: 3)

Firstly, many studies have explored the characteristics of foreign teachers' oral classroom teaching and the challenges encountered by teaching models. Some believe that from the perspective of teaching content, teaching methods, and teaching skills, the main characteristics of foreign teachers' oral English classes are as follows: foreign teachers tend to emphasize ability training and tend to adopt communicative methods. Specifically, they usually use question-and-answer techniques. In addition, foreign teachers do not often use textbooks in the classroom. Instead, they have their lesson plans and use their materials. About challenges, Sunita (2013) held that the challenges encountered by foreign teachers in class teaching mainly come from educational, social, and cultural aspects. These cultural difficulties may be related to traditions, personal treatment, or the appearance of teachers and students. (Li, 2019)

Secondly, some studies investigate foreign teachers' interactive forms, commonly-used teaching backgrounds, commonly-used teaching forms, and teaching models. For example, Li (2020) proposed that the interaction model of foreign teachers combines the first level of interaction in verbal English teaching, that is, the interaction between the classroom and extracurricular teachers and students, life and life interaction, combining life interaction with teacher-student emotion, situation and motivation interaction. Fakeye (2014) believed that the common teaching form of foreign teachers is acting out stories and events in language learning, such as role-playing/dramatic teaching. He believes that this aids memory for pronunciation and skill development if fully utilized. Also, conversational practice is popular which includes the following four organizations: turn-taking organization, adjacency pairs, preference organization, and repair organization.

Domestic scholars generally believe that English, as a language tool, has received more and more attention, and improving learners' spoken English has become an arduous task in English teaching.

First of all, Li (2018) has researched the oral classroom model of foreign teachers. After her research, she found that most foreign English teachers are lively, cheerful, and good at enlivening the classroom atmosphere. They have a more egalitarian outlook and are more inclined to praise and encourage students. Other studies have investigated the classroom teaching forms, principles, and methods commonly used by foreign teachers.

What's more, a number of studies have explored the limitations of foreign teachers' oral English classrooms. Xu (2014) started from the mutual adaptability between foreign teachers and students and found that foreign teachers lack an understanding of Chinese students and are affected by cultural differences, age differences, and other factors, making it difficult for many students to adapt to foreign teachers in oral classrooms. Finally, regarding the difficulties and doubts of foreign teachers teaching in China, Zhang and Wang (2005) believed that they are mainly manifested in four aspects: lacking understanding of China's education system and foreign language teaching requirements, lacking correct evaluation of Chinese students' foreign language proficiency, not adapting to the Chinese teaching environment, and lacking communication with Chinese teachers.

To summarize, foreign scholars believe that oral English teachers need to adopt flexible teaching methods to deal with students from different backgrounds. However, they are less involved in the problems of oral English classroom teaching, and their reference to the actual situation in China is also limited due to cultural differences. The research of domestic scholars takes into account the cultural and social background, and other influencing factors and conducts a more comprehensive analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of classroom teaching. However, they have little research on the verbal English of English majors, most of the research focuses on classroom teaching models, and there are fewer solutions to their problems. Therefore, this research has a certain innovative value for improving the efficiency of oral English classrooms according to the specific situation in China.

3. Research Design

The research focuses on answering the questions by comparative analysis of two teachers' teaching models. The students are 70 English majors at Hainan University. The data were collected via the mixed methods of both interviews and questionnaires. The results are analyzed via basic statistics.

3.1 Research Questions

This research addresses the following three questions:

- (1) How is students' participation and acquisition in foreign teachers' oral English class?
- (2) What teaching principles, teaching objectives, and evaluation standards and methods do foreign teachers adopt?
- (3) What are the students' attitudes toward their oral English teachers' teaching models?

3.2 Participants

The participants are classified into two types, two teachers and 70 students from two different classes. Both the teachers and some of the students participated in the interviews. All the students filled in the questionnaire sheets.

3.2.1 Native English Teachers

Both male foreign teachers get educational-related certificates and have plenty of experience in oral English teaching. Below are their details:

Teacher	Gender	Nationality	Degree	Teaching Experience	Relative Certification
Mr. A	Male	U.S.A	Master's degree in education	One year of ESL teaching in a US high school and over 10 years of English teaching in Chinese Universities.	Unknown
Mr. B	Male	U.K	Bachelor of Arts degree from The University of Gloucester shire	Teaching business English audiovisual and Oral English at The School of Foreign Languages, Hainan University, for over five years.	Cambridge Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA)

Table 1: Basic Information of Two Foreign Teachers

Table 1 shows that both teachers are male and they have working experience in China.

Mr. A is from U. S. A with a master's degree in education. Mr. B is from U. K with a degree of bachelor of arts and the Cambridge Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults.

3.2.2 Students of English Major

The subjects in this study are 70 sophomores (2020 Grade) from the College of Foreign Language, Hainan University, which contain 10 male students and 60 female students. They are divided into two classes-Class 1 and Class 2, and each of them includes 5 male students and 30 female students.

All the tested students are preparing to take the TEM-4 in their sophomore year and taking verbal English classes with two foreign teachers. The reason for choosing them is that the first-year students have just entered the school and are relatively unfamiliar with foreign teachers' oral English classes. Also, there are almost no oral English classes taught by foreign teachers to juniors and seniors. Among them, 4 girls and 2 boys participate in student interviews. These students show similar English proficiency and learning attitudes based on the test. Class 1 is taught by Mr. A from the USA in oral English teaching, while Class 2 is taught by Mr. B from the UK.

3.3 Data Collections

The data were collected from a questionnaire survey and interviews with both teachers and some students respectively. The questionnaire survey aims to explore the overall similarities of both teachers' oral English teaching modes plus the learners' attitudes towards the teachers. The interviews are expected to find out the differences between the teachers' personal descriptions of their teaching modes respectively and the responses from the learners respectively.

3.3.1 Questionnaires

In order to further study the participation of English majors in the oral English class of foreign teachers and explore the factors that affect their interaction, the study adopts an existing questionnaire named "Classroom Interaction Questionnaire of Oral English For Foreign Teachers of English Majors" from a paper called "A Study on Effective Interaction in Foreign Teachers" (Wang, 2018), which has been tested for reliability. The purpose of the questionnaire is to study the students' attitudes towards the two foreign teachers' teaching modes, so as to find out the similarities between the two teachers' teaching models.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts: the student's personal information and classroom interaction. The personal information section includes two questions about gender and personal evaluation of English proficiency. In the classroom interaction section, there are 13 multiple-choice questions about students' emotional involvement (1-4), acquisition (5-8), and behavior participation (9-13). Multiple-choice questions all use the Five-Point Likert scale, which is a psychometric response scale. Respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement typically in five points: 1- very consistent; 2- not very consistent; 3-somewhat consistent; 4-relatively consistent; 5- very consistent.

The subjects of the questionnaire are randomly selected students from the two chosen classes. There are 70 questionnaires of which 65 questionnaires were determined to be valid and all the questionnaires were recovered.

3.3.2 Interviews

As a supplement to the questionnaire method, interviews are conducted with two foreign teachers who teach oral English and sophomores majoring in English, expecting to have a more detailed and in-depth understanding of the content of the study. The interviews mainly tend to investigate the differences between the two teachers' teaching models.

The interviews are processed with two runs. The first run is the interviews with two teachers and the second run is the interviews with some students.

First, the interview with teachers. There are twelve open-ended questions for the teachers to learn about their teaching principles, teaching objectives, and evaluation standards and methods.

Second, interviews with some students. There are ten open-ended questions to investigate students' attitudes toward foreign teachers' teaching patterns.

4. Results and Discussion

In the research design, the author uses questionnaires and interviews to collect the research data and organize materials for oral English teaching by two foreign teachers. This part discusses the results of the above experiments, which includes students' participation behavior and acquisition, native teachers' teaching modes, and students' attitude toward native English teachers.

4.1 Students' Participation Behavior and Acquisition

This part discusses the results of the above experiments, which includes students' participation behavior and acquisition, native teachers' teaching modes, and students' attitude toward native English teachers.

4.1.1 Students' Emotional Involvement

Among the questions on the questionnaire sheet, there are four questions related to the students' emotional involvement. (1) I like oral English class; (2) I am interested in new topics; (3) I like to express ideas actively; (4) I feel nervous in class. The students are asked to scale their answers on the five Likert-like options: (1) very inconsistent, (2) not very consistent, (3) somewhat consistent, (4) relatively consistent, (5) very consistent

As mentioned above, there are 70 questionnaires distributed, of which 65 were valid. We transformed the valid answers into percentages and the four pies in Figure 1 account for the different portions of the students' preference answers. We use the percentage to illustrate the number of participants' answer choices. The proportion is calculated by dividing the number by the total number of participants.

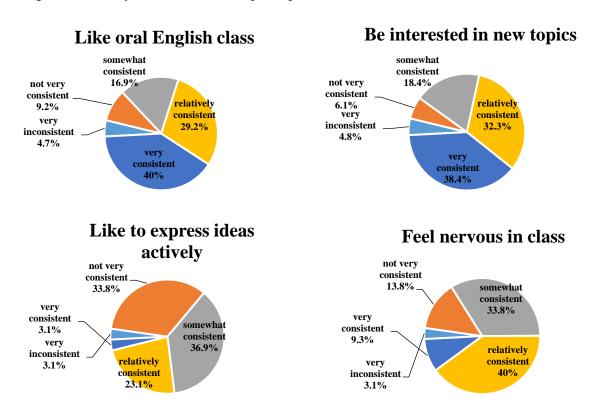


Figure 1: Students' Emotional Involvement

From this figure, there are three types of options for expressing students' positive feelings, namely: "Like oral English class", "Be interested in new topics", and "Like to express ideas actively". It can be seen from the data that only 9.2% of students express not very consistent and 4.7% very inconsistent about the question of whether they like the oral course or not. As for the question of being interested in new topics, only 6.1% chose "not very consistent" and 4.8% "very inconsistent". When it comes to the question that whether they like to express ideas actively, there are two extreme preferences the answers of "being very consistent" and "very inconsistent", which is the same percentage as 3.1%. Although there are still the majorities show that "somewhat consistent" (36.9%) and "relatively consistent" (23.1%), yet we can see the 33.8% as being "not very consistent". Combined with the next emotional question about feeling nervous in class, which illustrates only 9.3% of being "very consistent", we can see that Chinese English learners themselves generally do not feel nervous but are very reluctant to express ideas actively. This result is a big challenge for foreign teachers.

4.1.2 Students' Acquisition

The acquisition is composed of vocabulary argumentation, better pronunciation, and intonation, more like native English expression and learning about foreign cultures in general.

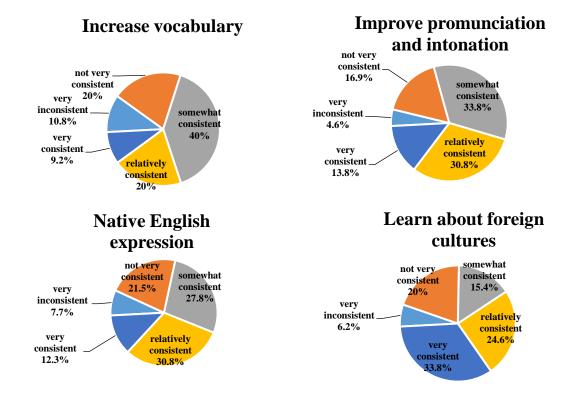
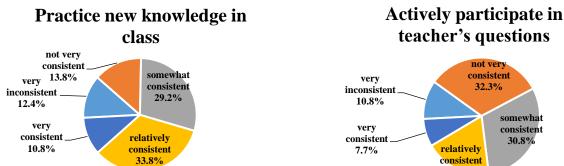


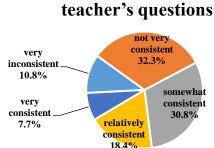
Figure 2: Students' Acquisition

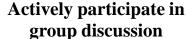
It can be seen from the above pies that the students who choose "consistent" in these four aspects exceed 70%. This shows that in oral class, students have gained a lot of knowledge, and the biggest gain for students is understanding foreign cultures. The training goal of oral English is to improve students' cross-cultural communication ability, which also prepares the necessary conditions for understanding foreign cultures and improving students' intercultural communication skills.

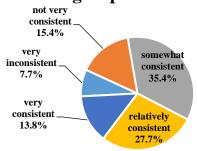
4.1.3 Students' Behavior Participation

The student's behavior participation concerns the aspects of practicing new knowledge in class, active participation in the activities, and the absorb degree of listening to the lectures.

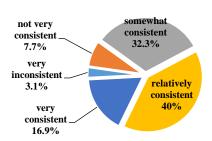








Listen carefully in class



Make own questions in class

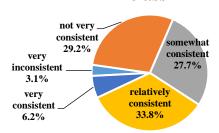


Figure 3: Students' Behavior Participation

As shown in the figure above, the proportion of students who choose "consistent" in the three aspects of "Practice new knowledge in class", "Actively participate in group discussion", and "Listen carefully in class" has reached more than 70%. It also shows that in these three aspects, students are still relatively active.

To be sure, most English majors can actively learn in class as well as actively participate in group discussions. However, the teacher-student interaction situation is not very optimistic by analyzing the data. This is reflected in "Actively participate in teacher's questions" and "Make own questions in class". In "Actively participate in teacher's questions", 32.3% of students choose "not very consistent", 30.8% of students choose "somewhat consistent", and 7.7% of students choose "very consistent". In terms of "Make own questions in class", 3.1% of the students choose "very inconsistent", 29.2% of the students choose "not very consistent", and 6.2% of the students choose "very consistent".

In a nutshell, students' performance is more active in group activities. They can listen attentively in class and communicate with other students engagingly in group activities. However, their enthusiasm for non-collective activities needs to be enhanced, which is reflected in less answering questions and taking the initiative to ask questions. This also shows that the initiative of students to participate in the interaction between teachers and students in the oral English classroom needs to be strengthened.

4.2 Native English Teachers' Teaching Models

After analyzing students' behavior and participation, this part intends to discuss two foreign teachers' teaching principles, teaching objectives, and evaluation standards.

4.2.1 Teaching Principles

	Teaching Attitude	Teaching Model	Homework Assignment
Mr. A	Encouraging education	Student-centered teaching model	Audio/video recording assignments
Mr. B	Encouraging education	Combination of Task- centered and Student- centered teaching model	Direct communication patterns

Table 2: Two Foreign Teachers' Teaching Principles

Both native English teachers adopt encouraging education. Regarding teaching modes, Mr. A follows a Socratic style of discussion/seminar-like classes because it puts the focus of learning on the students, while the instructor acts as a facilitator. This is a kind of "student-centered" teaching model. Thus, in his class, students are free to be volunteers. While Mr. B favors a communicative model of language teaching. This is widely considered the most effective environment for language acquisition, although it is not very different from the previously favored "PPP" (Present; Practice; Produce). For himself, he always combines two teaching models—the "student-centered" model and the "task-based" model with the "teacher-centered" model. Thus, students in his classes are forced to answer questions.

In addition, both of them agree that collaboration and interaction in the classroom are extremely important. However, they differ in the way they assign homework. Mr. A chooses audio/video recording assignments where the students can complete them independently and do not have the extra pressure of performing in front of a teacher and peers. In contrast, Mr. B chooses tasks that require the student to communicate in the target language in various interaction patterns, including one-to-one, small group, and whole-class scenarios.

4.2.2 Teaching Objectives

Regarding the teaching objectives of the oral English class, below are their respective understandings.

Mr. A focuses on speaking, reading, and listening fluency and comprehension. Along with increased fluency comes increased confidence and comfortability with using English. Mr. A believes that pronunciation and fluency play an important role in improving confidence in English usage. He also speaks a little slower and talks louder.

Mr. B holds that the main objective is to improve students' speaking and listening capabilities. It can be seen that both teachers believe that the goal of verbal English teaching is to develop learners' communicative ability so that learners can communicate appropriately and successfully under the rules and habits of the target language. Mr. B will deliberately slow down his speech in class to facilitate students' better understanding and imitation of authentic accents.

Of course, they are well aware that due to cultural differences, Chinese students do not like to speak publicly. At the same time, on account of the influence of exam-oriented education, students have fewer opportunities to practice oral English. Thus, they all tried every means to enable students to practice speaking more in the limited classroom time. In order to achieve this goal, they try to create a more relaxed environment, such as praising students more in class and in private, so as to reduce the pressure on students to speak in class.

4.2.3 Evaluation Standards and Methods

Teaching evaluation is an activity to judge the value of the teaching process and results according to teaching objectives. It is a process to judge the actual or potential value of teaching activities.

Mr. A uses the method of SOLOM (Student Oral Language Observation Matrix), which pays attention to comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The final grade consists of classwork, homework, participation, and summative or formative assessments. For Mr. B, final grades typically consist of 50% classroom performance and 50% final exam. In universities, oral English final exams are typically speaking or listening exams. Evaluation of class performance consists of general engagement in classroom activities, willingness to communicate in the target language, and facility in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. The best students demonstrate peer-teaching abilities.

In contrast, Mr. A places more emphasis on classroom participation, while Mr. B places more emphasis on a combination of attendance and classroom performance because Mr. B randomly selects people to check whether students are present.

4.3 Students' Attitudes towards Native English Teachers

At the end of the experimental semester, the researcher conducted interviews with some students in the two selected classes. It hopes to gain a deeper understanding of students' attitudes toward oral English teaching and native English teachers. A total of 6 students participated in the interview.

Through interviews, the researchers found that students prefer native English teachers, believing that their advantages outweigh their disadvantages. First, the pronunciation is more idiomatic. They believe that learning a language requires an authentic language environment. That native English teachers have perfect language skills can better bring them into a pure English oral-speaking learning environment. At the same time, they can also receive oral instruction from native English speakers at close range, which is almost difficult for Chinese teachers to do. Secondly, native English teachers can provide more cultural knowledge and the classroom atmosphere will be more relaxed and casual.

However, some students believe that in the final evaluation by foreign teachers, the part of class performance accounts for a large proportion, so there will be inaccurate scores. At the same time, due to the cultural habits of Chinese students, there is often a "silence phenomenon" in oral classes, which wastes class time. In addition, the students suggest that they should accept more traditional activities such as grammar practice, repetition practice, and memorization rather than activities such as role-playing, language games, or descriptions.

The students agree that their teachers follow certain steps in oral English classes, and they are also familiar with the strategies and methods their teachers used in their classroom teaching. However, they hold that foreign teachers' classrooms are sometimes casual and obey their teaching wishes.

5. Conclusion

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Firstly, regarding students' participation and acquisition, the overall situation of students' emotional participation is better than behavioral participation, and they are very enthusiastic about oral English learning, but their enthusiasm for participation in oral English class needs to be improved; From the perspective of students' classroom knowledge gain, culture gain > pronunciation and intonation > idiomatic expression > increasing vocabulary in foreign teachers' oral English class, which shows that students gain the most in culture learning, and this kind of culture teaching in foreign teachers' class is conducive to improving students' intercultural communicative competence, which is also in line with the teaching objectives of oral English class for English majors.

Secondly, regarding teaching principles, foreign teachers tend to adopt encouraging education and student-centered teachings, such as the Socratic style of discussion and the communicative mode of language teaching. For teaching objectives, Mr. A pays attention to speaking, reading, and listening fluency and comprehension and increasing fluency. In comparison, Mr. B's main objective is to improve students' speaking and listening capabilities. For evaluation standards and methods, Mr. A uses the method of SOLOM. While Mr. B focuses on attendance and classroom performance.

Finally, students support the teaching models of foreign teachers as a whole. But they prefer traditional activities and a combination of these two teaching modes, namely, a relaxed classroom atmosphere, less pressure to answer questions, rich and engaging classroom content, and rigorous teaching arrangements. In addition to pairing work, group discussions, and role-playing, oral English teachers should pay more attention to traditional activities such as grammar practice, memorization, and repetition.

Thus, it is suggested that teachers should adopt more serious teaching arrangements and change models of questioning which lead them to encourage students to take the initiative to speak. Also, they should accept a variety of interactive forms, such as teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and group interaction. From the perspective of students, they should adapt to foreign teachers' classes by repeating the recorded contents of the classroom and communicating with teachers frequently. What's more, students should change their mindset of learning—enhancing their self-confidence and establishing a sense of active learning. Meanwhile, they should raise awareness of active learning and improve English by broadening their practice channels and so on.

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