

# Research on the Path of Integrating Aesthetic Education into College English Public Speaking Courses

Gan Zhihui

*School of Foreign Language, Wuhan University of Bioengineering, Wuhan, Hubei, China  
Adaisnothere@sina.com*

**Abstract:** *According to requirements of the new liberal arts construction, the goal of college English public speaking courses is not only to develop comprehensive English application ability, but also to undertake the mission of improving students' comprehensive cultural literacy. In order to improve students' cultural literacy, many scholars believe aesthetic education can be integrated into English public speaking courses, as a significant part of humanistic quality education. This paper aims to explore the possibility of integrating aesthetic education into college English public speaking courses, and then puts forward the path of integrating aesthetic education into college English public speaking courses from the aspects of curriculum construction and reform, aesthetic education in public speaking class, aesthetic education in extracurricular activities, and condensation of educational and teaching achievements, so as to provide reference for college English public speaking courses implementing the fundamental task of cultivating virtue and educating people.*

**Keywords:** *Aesthetic Education; English Public Speaking; Aesthetic English Teaching*

## 1. Introduction

This paper explores the integration of aesthetic education into college English public speaking courses as a means to enhance students' linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. Aesthetic education, which focuses on cultivating an appreciation for beauty and artistic expression, can significantly enrich the learning experience in English speech courses. Integrating aesthetic education into university English classrooms can effectively unveil the inherent beauty in textbooks, guiding students to appreciate and discern the sublime, prompting them to actively explore the mysteries of language in an atmosphere of beauty. This cultivates refined sentiments and aesthetic tastes in students, assisting them in forming positive outlooks on life, values, and a global perspective. Integrating aesthetic education into English speech classes aligns with the requirements of quality-oriented education and is a natural choice for English teaching reform in the new era. Incorporating aesthetic education into speech classes requires treating both teachers and students as creative subjects. Through a questionnaire survey of 101 students and interviews with three teachers at X university, it was found that current college English public speaking teaching have some issues such as a lack of aesthetic literacy among teachers and students, and outdated teaching methods and database in the course.

## 2. The Current State of Aesthetic Education in University English Public Speaking Courses

The course English Public Speaking is major principle course in university, which is designed and offered to English major students with high English proficiency. It is an essential part of General Education at college. For English majors in this discipline, cultivating an expanded capacity for critical thinking is essential for gaining a holistic perspective on understanding subjects comprehensively. As their knowledge base continues to grow and refine, developing a more sophisticated level of cognitive ability, characterized by meticulousness and logical rigor, stands as a pivotal point in enhancing students' academic proficiency and overall personal development. Integrating aesthetic education into university English public speaking instruction serves to further hone these advanced cognitive skills among college students. The unique attributes of aesthetic education, such as its vividness and engaging nature, have the power to genuinely awaken students' subjective emotional awareness during the learning process, shifting from superficial perceptions to a deeper level of understanding, and breaking free from entrenched modes of thought. By synthesizing logical reasoning with expressive communication, this

approach fosters a coevolution of intellectual and aesthetic growth, ultimately elevating students' cognitive capabilities.

### 3. Problem Analysis of Aesthetic Education in University English Public Speaking Courses

Considering the current state of aesthetic education in college English public speaking teaching, a student questionnaire survey was designed for classroom instruction to identify existing problems in college English public speaking teaching. The questionnaire survey was conducted among 102 students selected from three undergraduate classes in the English major in the same university. The research subjects are randomly selected from two English public speaking class. Taking into account students' learning tasks, the questionnaire primarily consists of multiple-choice questions to ensure clarity of content and appropriateness of time. The main contents covered in the survey are as shown in the following table 1.

*Table 1: Questionnaire on the current situation of aesthetic learning among students in English public speaking course*

Theme	Question options
Students' Cognitive Level of Aesthetic Education	1-4
Aspects of Students' Learning Motivation Needs	5-9
Students' Aesthetic Ability and Experience Level	10-14
Students' Enjoyment Level in Aesthetic Learning	15-19

#### 3.1. Lack of Aesthetic Awareness

Lack of Aesthetic Awareness In the statistical analysis of survey results, it is revealed that 80.9% of college students lack aesthetic awareness, expressing only a lukewarm interest in aesthetic education. Delving deeper, the primary reason lies in the fact that contemporary college students are primarily preoccupied with their immediate practical needs, particularly concerning their future career prospects and employability. Consequently, they tend to channel a significant portion of their time and energy into professional courses and qualifications that offer a competitive edge in the job market. This pragmatic focus often overshadows the intrinsic value of learning, relegating the cultivation of "aesthetic awareness" to a luxury, far removed from the students' daily concerns. Through data analysis, the study finds that the use of aesthetic language, the incorporation of aesthetic activities into the second classroom, and the improvement of the aesthetic education teaching case resource repository can help enhance the teaching level of university English teachers. These approaches can also improve students' language proficiency, aesthetic ability, and cultural literacy, ultimately achieving a harmonious blend of instrumental and humanistic aspects in college English public speaking teaching.

#### 3.2. Absence of Aesthetic Attitude

Aesthetic attitude is intrinsically linked to aesthetic awareness. The survey questionnaire highlights a deficiency in students' aesthetic attitude, which underpins their apathy towards aesthetic education. This finding elucidates why a majority of students perceive aesthetic education within the context of English public speaking class as irrelevant or inconsequential to their lives and studies. Students often adopt a negative stance towards aesthetic activities and objects, a sentiment directly attributable to a pervasive lack of a proper aesthetic attitude amongst them. Language is a product of culture and also serves as its carrier.

Both native languages and target languages are rich in cultural connotations, and language learning cannot be separated from understanding the culture behind it. Foreign language education, fundamentally, is a form of cross-cultural education.<sup>[1]</sup> Through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, the findings shows that many English public speaking textbooks have aesthetic implications in the content. However, current teaching practices tend to be overly utilitarian. In English public speaking class, teachers often prioritize the explanation of phrases, grammar, sentence structures, and other linguistic points, and place more emphasis on improving students' English test scores rather than exploring the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of the texts. Some teachers rely on their own interpretations of the texts and conventional emotional summaries, imparting the inherent meanings and expressed thoughts of the texts to students. This approach to aesthetic education does not encourage students to actively explore the aesthetic implications and emotional depths of the works themselves, which is detrimental to cultivating students' aesthetic abilities. Over time, students may develop habitual

thinking patterns, making it difficult for them to have unique aesthetic experiences when appreciating any works. They may become accustomed to accepting ready-made knowledge and resist engaging in investigative aesthetic appreciation.

### ***3.3. Insufficiency in Aesthetic Appreciation***

The absence of aesthetic appreciation can be interpreted as a deficiency in the capacity to savor beauty. According to the Cihai (Dictionary of the Chinese Language), aesthetic appreciation is categorized as a facet of personal cultivation, encompassing one's sensitivity, appreciation, and comprehension of beauty, all of which are expressed through subjective perception. In the realm of English language learning, students often fall short in appreciating the nuances of content, style, phonetics, rhythm, and rhetorical devices. This inadequacy in aesthetic appreciation indicates a need for improvement in everyday living, learning, and creative artistic thinking abilities. The ultimate goal of aesthetic education is to elevate personal refinement, with a dual focus. The first focus is involved the rich aesthetic resources embedded within basic English course materials and the second one is on students as aesthetic subjects, immersing themselves in the appreciation of beauty to enhance their personal qualities. Survey data reveals that 70.6% of students exhibit a scarcity of aesthetic enjoyment, suggesting a failure to achieve fundamental aesthetic recognition, with the exhilaration derived from studying course materials falling short of expectations.

In conclusion, addressing the identified gaps in aesthetic awareness, attitude, and appreciation requires a concerted effort to integrate aesthetic education more effectively into the curriculum. This entails cultivating an appreciation for the intrinsic beauty of language and literature, fostering a positive attitude towards aesthetic pursuits, and nurturing the ability to discern and relish the finer aspects of artistic expression. By doing so, we can empower students to become more well-rounded individuals, capable of deriving genuine pleasure and enrichment from the multifaceted beauty that surrounds them. This holistic approach not only enhances students' aesthetic literacy but also contributes significantly to their overall personal and professional development.

## **4. Approaches to Integrate Aesthetic Education into College English Public Speaking Courses**

### ***4.1. Employing Aesthetically Educational Language in the Teaching Process***

Teachers, through clear and expressive reading, not only enable students to appreciate the rhythm and fluency of language but also stimulate their imagination, allowing them to feel the charm of language audibly. Additionally, by simulating realistic communicative dialogues, students can experience the practicality and vividness of language in interaction, enhancing their intuitive perception of linguistic aesthetics.<sup>[2]</sup> Carefully selected textual materials, whether poems, excerpts from novels, or speeches, allow students to discover the subtleties of language during reading. First and foremost, teachers should use organizational and directive classroom language to guide students in conducting class activities, such as "Open your book!" or "Try your best to finish the exercise," can only achieve instructional guidance functions and cannot fulfill aesthetic educational functions. By analyzing the author's word choice, rhetorical devices, and expression techniques, students can deeply understand the emotions and thoughts behind the language, thereby appreciating its depth and breadth. Besides, teacher can pay attention to cultivating standard writing habits not only fosters students' patience and meticulousness but also allows them to sense the morphological beauty of letters and words stroke by stroke. Elegant fonts and neat layouts are manifestations of linguistic formal beauty, deepening students' understanding of linguistic aesthetics.<sup>[3]</sup> Third, English public speaking course instructors should subtly integrate aesthetic education into their teaching, using flexible and varied teaching methods and assessment techniques. Modern teaching methods, such as videos, audio, animations, and interactive software, provide rich audio-visual experiences that help students more intuitively understand and memorize language knowledge. These multimedia resources not only ignite students' interest in learning but also broaden their horizons, enabling them to gain more aesthetic experiences while enjoying the learning process. They also should permeate every teaching phase with aesthetic elements, aiming to seek truth through beauty, inspire passion through beauty, and educate through beauty. On one hand, instructors should exhibit elegant and dignified teaching demeanor on the podium, with civil and amiable language, fluent and beautiful pronunciation and intonation, emotionally rich teaching, and concise and harmoniously colored teaching materials. These teaching presentation forms imbue the classroom with artistic appeal, capturing students' attention and allowing them to learn the language with a positive experience. On the other hand, English speech instructors should vary their teaching methods according to the teaching content and objectives. Students maintain curiosity and a thirst for knowledge throughout the class, especially when instructors

employ situational teaching methods. The arrangement of the teaching environment and the creation of scenarios can integrate elements of formal and value beauty, providing participants with a beautiful experience.

#### ***4.2. Incorporating Aesthetic Education into Second Classroom Activities***

A moderate amount of second classroom activities can consolidate the learning outcomes from the first classroom and further stimulate students' interest in learning and their pursuit of beauty. English public speaking courses in college can leverage their disciplinary strengths to organize a series of English practice activities.<sup>[4]</sup> For example, encouraging students to participate in the FLTRP·ETIC Cup English Public Speaking Contest can help meet the basic requirements for high-level talent in future national development. Participating in this contest not only enhances students' foreign language abilities and critical thinking skills but also their aesthetic capabilities. The contest mainly focused on improving speaking abilities as a "driving force" to comprehensively enhance students' overall foreign language application abilities and aesthetic sensibilities. In addition, schools can organize a series public speaking activities of "Telling Chinese Stories in Foreign Languages". Themes could include hometown stories, history stories, stories about famous figures in their field of study, and intangible cultural heritage stories, allowing students to draw nourishment from these stories, appreciate the beauty of life, and form healthy values. In public speaking class, it is crucial to cultivate students' communicative abilities, encouraging them to speak English boldly and enthusiastically. This helps students break free from the "silent" English learning model. Teachers should create a rich and diverse range of simulated situations for students, such as performing short plays, engaging in current affairs commentary, participating in debates, holding poetry recitals, and organizing film screenings followed by discussions. These activities enrich students' learning experiences and provide them with a deeper understanding of the cultural aspects of the English language.

#### ***4.3. Establishing an Aesthetic Education Teaching Case Resource Database***

During the organization of teaching, teachers need to emphasize the accumulation of teaching outcomes. The course-based political education teaching case resource repository, as an integral part of aesthetic education, requires gradual enrichment and systematization. English practice-themed series of activities should be carried out systematically. Both teachers and students should see a steady increase in the number of high-level awards they win in high-quality English teaching and English competitions. Teachers' capabilities in teaching innovation should be progressively improved, eventually leading to applications for teaching achievement awards at the appropriate levels. In the research, more than half of teacher believe that there is a lack of relevant reference books and materials that incorporate aesthetic education in English speech courses. Even when these topics are addressed, they are often not explored in depth. There is no established systematic educational framework for English speech disciplines, nor is there a comprehensive and systematic English speech case resource repository. To strengthen the integrity of the English discipline education system, it is necessary for teachers and experts to collect as many cases as possible, establish a teaching resource repository, and compile a comprehensive and systematic English speech textbook that integrates aesthetic education.

### **5. Conclusion**

In recent years, the education department has formulated a series of policies aimed at enhancing aesthetic education in higher education institutions, providing institutional support for such efforts. The Ministry of Education's Opinions on Strengthening Aesthetic Education in Higher Education Institutions in the New Era (2019) clearly states that aesthetic education in universities is essential for moral education and nurturing the soul, and should be treated as a priority task. According to the Guidelines for University English Teaching (2020 edition), the university English speech course system consists of modules for intercultural communication and general English. University English speech teaching reforms face new demands and challenges. To address the current overemphasis on the instrumental nature of English speech education and adapt to the development trends of university English education reform, incorporating aesthetic education into university English speech teaching is imperative.

Integrating discipline-specific knowledge with aesthetic awareness in English speech teaching provides a more comprehensive approach than simply imparting information mechanically. This study explores the integration of university English speech and aesthetic education. Practice has shown that university English aesthetic teaching significantly enhances students' comprehensive application abilities

and humanistic qualities, achieving a harmonious combination of instrumental and humanistic aspects of English teaching.

According to the research, the aesthetic ability of English teachers directly influenced the effectiveness of students' aesthetic education. Throughout teaching process, teachers play a crucial role. Only by striving to enhance their own aesthetic cultivation, improving their cultural literacy, and fully exploring the aesthetic elements in teaching to guide students, can English teachers ensure that aesthetic education in their subject is effectively implemented and achieves tangible results. Teachers' aesthetic qualities directly influence the aesthetic qualities of the students they teach. Currently, most schools do not pay sufficient attention to this aspect. They often focus on training in artistic education and aesthetics but completely overlook the aesthetic education of the faculty. To cultivate students who can adapt to multicultural environments, it is essential to improve the aesthetic qualities of university teachers. This includes enabling educators at all levels to skillfully use modern multimedia teaching equipment and fostering students who possess independent thinking skills and are open to new ideas.

Cultivating aesthetic qualities not only requires improvements in hardware and equipment but also necessitates addressing the softer aspects of thought and mindset. Only then can teachers truly internalize aesthetic awareness and concepts, applying them in their teaching and educational work. This approach addresses the fundamental issues of the lack of aesthetic education currently present in schools.

This article analyzes and discusses the infiltration of aesthetic education in English teaching. However, due to the exploratory stage of research on university English speech textbooks, there are still many limitations and shortcomings. There is a lack of material that applies theory to practice, which requires further development and refinement in teaching practice. Selecting this topic for research is in line with the trend of contemporary development and needs of Chinese university course revolution. It has provided great promise for future research. The integration of aesthetic education into English public speaking teaching not only responds to the changing times but also aligns with the broader goals of college English education. As such, research in this area is likely to have a significant impact for college students' education.

## References

- [1] Hao Yunhui.(2019-10-21). *Firmly establishing cultural Confidence in Foreign Language Education*. *Guangming Daily*, 002.
- [2] Li Tiantian.(2015). *Aesthetic Education in College English Teaching*. *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Education Science Edition)*,28(12) :88-89.
- [3] Qian Guanlian.(2004). *Aesthetic Linguistics -- Linguistics and the Beauty of Speech (2nd Ed.)*. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 17.
- [4] John Dewey.(2004). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Dover Publications, 24.