

Context Theory and College English Listening Teaching

Bi Yan^{1,a,*}

¹Department of Foreign Languages, Liaoning Institute of Science and Technology, Benxi, China

^a1550149748@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: Context theory refers to the importance of the environment, background and context in the use of language for understanding and interpreting the meaning of language. In English teaching, understanding and applying contextual theory is crucial to students' language learning. First of all, context can help students understand the true meaning of vocabulary and sentences. By putting words and phrases into specific contexts, students can better understand their meaning and usage. Secondly, the context helps students predict and speculate information. In listening, students often need to infer the meaning of unknown words or sentences according to the context, so that students can develop situation prediction ability, so as to improve their listening comprehension. In addition, context can also help students understand and experience English culture [1]. By combining language and cultural background, students can better understand the idiom, implied meaning and cultural connotation of English. Teachers can introduce relevant English cultural knowledge into listening and teaching to enrich students' language learning experience.

Keywords: Context, Listening Comprehension, Scenario Prediction, Cultural Background

1. Introductions

In English listening classes, students usually train their listening comprehension skills by listening to recordings. However, the problem faced by students at present is that they may have heard the content of the recording clearly, but they can't understand the meaning. A typical example is that students can hear the pronunciation of each word, but they can't understand the humor. This shows that in addition to phonetics, grammar and semantics, contextual factors also affect listening comprehension. Therefore, applying contextual theory to listening teaching can help students improve their listening comprehension ability. By incorporating contextual theory into listening teaching, educators can create authentic and meaningful listening tasks that reflect the complexities of everyday communication. This approach encourages students to actively engage with the language by considering the context in which the conversation takes place. In the teaching process, English teachers should consider how to help students master contextual knowledge and reconstruct contextual patterns to improve their listening comprehension ability. This is crucial because listening comprehension plays a vital role in language learning and communication. By understanding the context, students can better comprehend the meaning, tone, and intention behind the spoken words. Next, this article will combine the problems in teaching practice to explore the practical application of contextual theory in listening teaching.

2. Context Theory and Its Development

As the name implies, the context is the language environment. This concept was proposed by the British anthropologist Malnowski in 1923. He believes that "the discourse and the environment are closely combined, and the language environment is essential for understanding language." Later, this theory continued to develop. In 1950, the British linguist Firth proposed that in addition to "language environment", that is, the relationship between the context, it also includes "situational context", that is, the relationship between language and social environment. Systematic functional linguists, represented by Halliday, have conducted in-depth research on the types of contextual factors and their role in the selection and use of language systems, put forward the concept of "register", and summarized the scenario factors that determine language characteristics into the following three: field, tenor and mode, respectively, referring to the environment in which language occurs [2].

Changes in any of the three components of the domain will cause changes in the meaning of communication, resulting in language variations and different types of contexts. Hu Zhuanglin (1994) divided the "context" into three categories, one refers to the internal environment of the text, that is, the "Linguistic context"; the other refers to the surrounding situation at the time of the beginning of the text, the nature of the event, the relationship of the participants, time, place, way, etc., which can be called "

"Cultural context" refers to the understanding and interpretation of a text based on the cultural background, customs, and traditions of the people within a speech community. It allows individuals to comprehend the meaning of a text beyond its literal words by considering the cultural nuances and references embedded within it. Due to the constraints and vivid characteristics of the context, its role in the understanding of the text is crucial. Mastering the specific contextual meaning of words can eliminate ambiguity in understanding, and can also make seemingly incomplete sentences express reasonable meanings and understand the speaker's implication, so as to strengthen people's understanding of the text.

3. Theoretical Application Research

Listening comprehension is indeed a complex process that involves various cognitive and linguistic skills. Speech recognition technology plays a crucial role in facilitating this process by converting spoken language into written text, which enables individuals to understand and comprehend the information conveyed in the speech [3]. Through speech recognition, the system can analyze the sentences and convert them into text, allowing for easier comprehension and understanding of the spoken content. Therefore, the training of listening comprehension should also be strengthened step by step.

3.1 Strengthen Listening Comprehension

3.1.1 Solid Phonetic Knowledge

In English learning, the first thing for students to master is the correct pronunciation of the words they have learned and the differences between British and American pronunciations. It is also crucial for students to be aware of the differences between British and American pronunciations. While both varieties of English are mutually intelligible, there are distinct variations in accent, vowel sounds, and word stress. Familiarizing themselves with these differences will enable students to adapt their pronunciation according to the context and audience they are communicating with. To expand the vocabulary and pay attention to a large number of homophones in English are very important. Only in this way can students quickly connect the sound with the word in the mind when listening to the sound according to the context, and eliminate the ambiguity caused by homophones. Through repeated listening training, students can improve their sensitivity and comprehension ability of English pronunciation, so as to better understand and apply what they hear [4]. In addition, by imitating native speakers and recording themselves, learners can enhance their phonetic skills and achieve more accurate and natural pronunciation. This practice allows learners to observe and mimic the intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns of native speakers, helping them develop a more authentic pronunciation. Additionally, recording oneself provides an opportunity for self-assessment and comparison to native speaker models, allowing learners to identify and correct any pronunciation errors or inconsistencies. Overall, this active engagement with native speech patterns can greatly contribute to improving pronunciation proficiency. By immersing oneself in the natural rhythms, intonations, and nuances of a language, learners can develop a more accurate and authentic pronunciation. This practice allows them to closely observe the intonation, stress patterns, and rhythm of the language. By comparing their own recordings with those of native speakers, they can identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments. Furthermore, this process helps learners internalize the correct pronunciation through repeated practice, leading to better fluency and comprehension.

3.1.2 Pay Attention to the Pronunciation and Intonation

The English language often uses the phonetic characteristics such as varied stress, tone, intonation, pause, and pitch length to express the speaker's emotional color. These elements play a crucial role in conveying the intended meaning and adding depth to communication. For example, stress patterns can emphasize certain words or phrases, indicating importance or urgency. Tone and intonation can convey emotions such as excitement, anger, or sarcasm. Pauses and pitch length can help to create rhythm and convey nuances in meaning. Overall, these phonetic characteristics contribute to the expressive and

dynamic nature of spoken English. In the same sentence, using different tones can express completely opposite meanings and various emotional colors, and the intonation plays an important role in the process of understanding. Therefore, When learning English, it is important for students to prioritize their vocabulary studies. Instead of focusing on rare words that are seldom used in everyday conversation or writing, it is more beneficial to concentrate on commonly used words. These words often have variable parts of speech and multiple meanings, which will allow students to expand their language skills and improve their overall understanding of English. By familiarizing themselves with these versatile words, students will be better equipped to communicate effectively in various contexts [5]. These commonly used words are used frequently in daily communication, and mastering their different parts of speech and meanings is essential for understanding and using English. For example, the verb "run" can mean the behavior of running, or the management or management of something, depending on the use of context and intonation. Therefore, students should pay attention to the flexible use of these common words to improve the accuracy and authenticity of English expression. This can be achieved through practice and exposure to different contexts in which these words are used. Students should make a conscious effort to expand their vocabulary and become familiar with various synonyms and antonyms for these common words. Additionally, they should strive to understand the connotations and nuances associated with each word, as this will enable them to choose the most appropriate word for a given situation. By continuously honing their language skills and exploring different ways to express themselves, students can enhance their ability to communicate effectively in English and become more confident and fluent in their conversations.

3.1.3 Consolidate the Basic Knowledge of Phonetics and Vocabulary

The basic knowledge of phonetics and vocabulary is the basis for us to understand listening materials based on the language context, that is, the context. In listening teaching, teachers can design a variety of listening exercises to help students consolidate and improve their basic knowledge of phonetics and vocabulary. These exercises can include word recognition, vocabulary selection, filling in the blanks, etc. Through these exercises, students can better understand the phonetic changes and vocabulary usage in listening materials, and cultivate their ability to understand words and sentences in context. In addition, listening exercises can also help students master the collocation of words and the relationship between sentences [6]. Through the examples and contexts in listening materials, students can learn how to correctly match words to avoid inappropriate combinations in expression. This is crucial for effective communication and conveying ideas accurately. By listening to authentic spoken language, students can observe how native speakers use certain words together and avoid common mistakes. They can learn about collocations, idiomatic expressions, and phrasal verbs, which are essential for natural and fluent communication. Additionally, exposure to diverse listening materials helps students develop their vocabulary and expand their knowledge of different word combinations. At the same time, through listening practice, students can also learn to infer the logical relationship between sentences from the context, and understand the connection and coherence between paragraphs and chapters.

To sum up, the basic knowledge of phonetics and vocabulary is the basis for understanding listening materials. Mastering phonetics allows students to accurately pronounce words and understand their sounds, which in turn helps them recognize and comprehend spoken words in listening materials. Additionally, a strong vocabulary foundation enables students to grasp the meanings of words they encounter while listening, facilitating comprehension of the overall context. Through listening practice, students can consolidate and improve their phonetic and vocabulary knowledge, and cultivate the ability to understand words and sentences in context, so as to understand the collocation between words, the relationship between sentences and sentences, and the relationship between paragraphs and chapters. With a holistic approach, individuals become more proficient in identifying key points, recognizing patterns, and making connections between different pieces of information. This allows them to effectively interpret complex ideas and messages, even when faced with unfamiliar or challenging content.

3.2 Develop Situational Prediction Ability

In the listening test, it is indeed very common for questions to be asked about the context of the text. These questions require you to demonstrate your understanding of the main idea, supporting details, and overall meaning of the passage. It's important to pay attention to the context while listening and take notes if necessary to help answer these types of questions accurately. These questions are designed to test students' ability to understand the background and context of the dialogue. By answering these questions, students can show whether they can infer the place and time of the conversation, the identity

and relationship of the interlocutor, as well as the attitude and views of the speaker based on the information provided in the dialogue [7]. Understanding the contextual context of a text is crucial for accurately answering questions. It provides the necessary background information that helps us grasp the meaning and intent of the dialogue or conversation. By considering the context, we can ensure that our responses are relevant and appropriate. Therefore, when preparing for the listening test, Students should pay attention to practicing the inference and understanding of the context of the situation, so that they can accurately answer relevant questions. This is an important skill that helps them comprehend and analyze information effectively. By practicing inference, students can draw logical conclusions based on the given information and make connections between different ideas. Additionally, understanding the context of the situation allows students to grasp the underlying meaning and implications of a text or problem. It enables them to go beyond surface-level understanding and delve deeper into the subject matter. Because different texts have their corresponding contextual contexts, specific words always appear in specific contexts, such as conversations between salespeople and customers, and conversations between doctors and patients. In the current college English listening class, unit teaching involves different topics. Cultivating situational context awareness involves helping students recognize and understand the different factors and variables that influence a particular situation or problem. Furthermore, teachers should guide students in mastering the characteristics of multiple context modes. This involves helping students identify and understand how the same topic can be approached and understood from different perspectives or contexts. Take the topic of health as an example to guide students to listen to dialogues or essays in a variety of contexts, which can not only cultivate students' context sensitivity, but also help students establish a logical relationship between context and pragmatics, thus helping students to reconstruct the context in the listening test.

In the college English listening test, students only see the listening options on the test paper, which contain the context related to the listening material. According to the options, students can preliminarily infer the content of the material, according to the situational context mode accumulated in daily practice, consciously pay attention to listening to the relevant content in the process of listening, and reconstruct the situational context in the heart, so as to smoothly understand all the content [8]. This method can help students better understand listening materials, improve listening skills and scores. In addition, students can also do more listening exercises to cultivate sensitivity to different pronunciations, intonations and paces, and improve their understanding of common vocabulary, phrases and grammatical structures. In summary, through active practice and correct strategies, students can achieve good results in college English listening tests.

3.3 Enrich the Cultural Knowledge Carried by the English Language

Language and culture are inseparable. It is indeed crucial to have a good grasp of the living customs, expression habits, idioms, and idiomatic phrases used by people in English-speaking countries in order to enhance English listening comprehension. By familiarizing oneself with these aspects of the culture, one can better understand the nuances and contextual meanings behind spoken English, leading to improved overall language proficiency. For example, the idiom rain cats and dogs can never be understood literally. Of course, the accumulation of cultural knowledge cannot be achieved overnight, which requires continuous accumulation in daily learning, not only in listening classes, but also through college English comprehensive courses and extensive extracurricular reading. Accumulating certain background knowledge can indeed help learners create real language situations. By having a solid understanding of various topics and subjects, learners can engage in meaningful conversations and discussions that reflect real-life situations. This background knowledge provides them with the necessary vocabulary, context, and cultural understanding to effectively communicate and express themselves in the language they are learning. Background knowledge helps learners make connections between new information and their existing knowledge. When learners can relate new concepts to what they already know, it becomes easier for them to understand and retain the information. For example, if a learner has prior knowledge of different types of animals, they will find it easier to learn about new animals because they can draw on their existing knowledge to make connections and understand the similarities and differences.[9]. Before listening materials, the teacher introduces the background knowledge related to listening materials. For example, before doing exercises related to food and drinks, the teacher can tell some Western catering culture, table etiquette, etc. in English, and with some vivid pictures or videos, students can use this knowledge to form and guess the relevant cultural context, and then more accurately predict and analyze the information conveyed by the listening

3.4 Deepen the Understanding and Application of Contextual Theory Through Oral Communication Exercises

The materials in listening exercises or tests are compiled based on realistic communication scenarios. This is done to provide learners with practical and authentic listening experiences. By using real-life situations, learners can better understand how the language is used in everyday conversations and develop their listening skills accordingly. These scenarios may include conversations between friends, colleagues, or even strangers, covering a wide range of topics such as shopping, traveling, making appointments, and more. By applying contextual theory to oral communication, students can be guided to verbally express the dialogue in real scenes with authenticity and relevance. This approach allows students to practice their speaking skills in a meaningful and practical way, as they are encouraged to communicate within specific contexts and situations. Rather than simply memorizing and regurgitating phrases or sentences, students are prompted to engage in spontaneous conversations that reflect real-life scenarios. This approach helps students understand how language is used in different situations and contexts, allowing them to develop their speaking skills in a more authentic and meaningful way. This method can stimulate students' interest in learning and deepen their understanding of contextual knowledge. In addition, such exercises can also help students improve their listening comprehension ability [10].

Teachers can carry out group discussions, sitcom performances, film and television drama role dubbing, etc. around unit topics in the classroom, and deepen students' understanding of relevant vocabulary, situational context simulation and relevant cultural background knowledge through oral practice. These activities can stimulate students' interest, improve their oral expression ability, and help them better understand and apply what they have learned. In group discussions, students can share their views and ideas, communicate and interact with their peers, so as to cultivate their cooperation ability and team consciousness. The performance of sitcoms and the dubbing of film and television drama characters allow students to feel and simulate the real language environment immersively, and improve the accuracy of their sense of voice and intonation. At the same time, these activities can also help students understand and experience relevant cultural backgrounds and increase their cross-cultural communication skills. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering the development of students' oral ability and comprehensive language application ability through various oral practice activities. These activities provide students with opportunities to actively engage in conversations, express their thoughts and opinions, and improve their communication skills.

4. Conclusions

Teachers need to pay attention to several aspects when applying contextual theory to guide English listening teaching. First of all, creating a real context environment is crucial for effective listening training. This allows learners to experience authentic situations and challenges, enabling them to develop their listening skills in a practical and realistic way. When learners are exposed to genuine conversations, speeches, or recordings that reflect real-life scenarios, they can better understand the nuances of language, such as intonation, stress, and colloquial expressions. By providing students with opportunities to practice listening in authentic situations, we can greatly enhance their learning experience. This can be achieved through various means, such as incorporating real-life audio or video materials into the curriculum, organizing field trips or guest speakers, and encouraging students to engage in conversations with native speakers. Secondly, it is necessary to choose appropriate listening materials and activities according to the actual situation and level of students to ensure that students can understand and apply the knowledge they have learned. In addition, teachers can also use pre-teaching techniques to help students better understand and process listening materials. By predicting, speculating, and generalizing, teachers can provide students with a framework or context to make sense of the information they hear. Finally, teachers should pay attention to evaluation and feedback, keep abreast of students' listening progress, and adjust teaching methods according to the evaluation results, so that students can continuously improve their listening comprehension ability. In addition, technology can be utilized effectively to enhance listening comprehension. Teachers can make use of online resources, language learning apps, and multimedia tools to expose students to different accents, speech speeds, and genres of listening materials. These technological aids can also provide opportunities for self-assessment and independent practice, allowing students to track their own progress and identify areas for improvement. In short, the combination of theory and practice can better guide English listening teaching and improve students' listening ability.

References

- [1] Hu, Z.L., (1994). *Continuation and coherence of the text*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, (7), 35-40.
- [2] Chen, X.Y., (2008). *Brief analysis of English intonation function*. *Journal of Zhejiang University of Industry and Commerce*, (1), 86-87.
- [3] Zhang, L., (2011). *Listening teaching in the context*. *Journal of Guizhou Normal University*, (5), 112-115.
- [4] Fang, W.L., (2003). *Horizontal discussion on foreign language task-based teaching methods*. *Foreign Languages and Foreign Language Teaching*, (7), 9.
- [5] Luo, H., (2004). *Discussion on audio-visual teaching in English*. *Journal of Chongqing Institute of Technology*, (5), 13-14.
- [6] Sun, C. D., (1997). *Develops Multimedia Teaching to Promote the Modernization of Education*. *Modern Distance Education*, (1), 63-64.
- [7] Tian, J., (1999). *Interactive Mode of Audio-visual Class*. *Journal of Hengyang Normal University*, (6), 54-60.
- [8] Wang, H.Y., (2007). *Social Constructivism and English Audio-visual Teaching*. *Journal of Qiongzhou College*, (3), 98.
- [9] Wu, X.D., (2006). *Second Language Acquisition Research - Methodology and Practice*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Publishing, (5), 134-136.
- [10] Wu, P., (2009). *Comparative Study of Traditional English Listening and Speaking Courses and English Audio-visual Courses under the Constructivist Model*. *Journal of Liang Bing Jiangxi Normal University*, (4), 79-80.