



# A Study of News Discourse Analysis in Chinese Colleges' English Audio-Visual Teaching

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**Abstract:** *The Ministry of Education clearly stated in the Teaching Requirements for College English Courses issued in 2007 that college English audio-visual courses are one of the important ways to train listening and speaking ability. In addition, news English listening, as an crucial part of the knowledge and professionalism in listening teaching, will inevitably become an important part of college English teaching. However, there are few researches on audio-visual teaching based on English news discourse analysis. These need us to make a further research in depth. Based on the theory of textual function of Halliday's functional grammar, the study intends to research English news audio-visual teaching which is conducive to the acquisition of second language. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to the cultivation of students' English listening and speaking ability and the innovation of teaching methods. This research mainly uses the literature research method and the questionnaire survey method. Through investigation and analysis, it is found that news audio-visual teaching has not been widely used in college English teaching and has not received much attention. At the same time, it is also found that most teachers and students believe that the English news audio-visual teaching based on discourse analysis has great feasibility and has certain effects on improving the English comprehensive ability of college students.*

**Keywords:** *discourse analysis; English news audio-visual teaching; college students' English listening and speaking ability*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the modification of college English syllabus and the further college English reform, the construction of the scientific and effective teaching mode becomes more and more important. College English Teaching Guide has clearly pointed out English news listening is the most important part of English listening teaching. Therefore, English news audio-visual teaching based on discourse analysis is an effective and excellent way to improve students' communication skills. About discourse analysis, Schiffrin (1994) introduces six methods for discourse analysis in Approaches to Discourse and applies them to discourse analysis practice. Meanwhile, Halliday (1994) constructs a systemic functional grammar that provides a theoretical framework for discourse analysis. Many domestic researchers have also made many attempts to introduce discourse analysis into foreign language teaching, such as the use of discourse analysis in English writing, English reading and English-Chinese translation. However, there are few people who have tried to introduce the application of discourse analysis into the research work of audio-visual teaching. So this paper intends to pay attention to discourse analysis in audio-visual teaching and apply discourse analysis to news listening.

## 2. THE BACKGROUND ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH AUDIO-VISUAL TEACHING

This chapter provides a detailed review of the related information at home and abroad. There are two parts in the literature review. They are about the current situation, particularity and significance of college English audio-visual teaching.

### 2.1. The Current Situation of College English Audio-visual Teaching

There are four mainly problems existing in the teaching. Firstly, College English audio-visual teaching has not received attention. Second, teaching content is boring and teaching mode is single. Third, lack of college English audio-visual environment. Fourth, lack of a sound faculty. The traditional single teaching mode enables students to passively follow the teacher's rhythm, easily causing students to experience hearing fatigue, reducing students' interest in learning, making the

entire English audio-visual teaching activities lack vigor. Besides, classroom effect is boring and the quality of teaching is declining. At the same time, the traditional English audio-visual teaching materials are single and outdated, unable to keep up with the development of the times and the speed of knowledge update. The most important thing in English audio-visual teaching is the language environment. Most of the college English audio-visual teaching in China is in the voice classroom. Due to the poor teaching equipment, it hinders the communication and interaction between teachers and students, which leads to the decrease of students' speaking opportunities and desires.

### **2.2. The Particularity of Audio-Visual Teaching**

Audio-visual teaching integrates vision, hearing, thinking and judgment. It provides students with comprehensive and comprehensive training in a wide range of fields. In English news audio-visual teaching, students are exposed to spoken language, which has some unique characteristics. The language in audio-visual materials is often incomplete, informal, and appears features such as repetition, pause, re-reading, and slow reading. Only they understand the spoken language features of the language in audio-visual materials can students gain meaning from the spoken language. Therefore, in the practice of audio-visual teaching, students should be consciously familiar with the oral features of news reports and pay attention to the difference between spoken and written language. The particularity of English news audio-visual teaching also lies in more of a news report theme. And it usually has its own form and structure to guide students to analyze and study the subject matter of news reports, so that they can familiarize themselves with the form and structure inherent in news reports, and better grasp the central content of news reports.

### **2.3. The Significance of College English Audio-Visual Teaching**

The literature reviews which I have read illustrates the study of audio-visual teaching based on news discourse is more conducive to the acquisition of second language. Firstly, discourse-centered approach to discourse analysis can make audio-visual teaching pay attention to both wide sense and narrow sense, and is an effective method. Secondly, the advantages of the news discourse itself are worthy of our acquisition of the second language. Because news discourse can reflect the latest changes in language. Moreover, the genre structure of the news is rigorous and suitable for college students to acquire standardized norms. The news discourse is rich in content and covers all fields. It can help students learn cultures of other countries while learning the language. If we can effectively combine news discourse and audio-visual teaching, it will have a multiplier effect on the cultivation of English listening and speaking ability of college students. It also provides an innovative method for the country to train international English talents. We hope that through the research of this paper, scholars can pay attention to the cultivation of college students' listening and speaking ability, and pay attention to the use of news discourse in English teaching.

Through the online literature review, there are few researches on English audio-visual teaching which is based on the theory of textual function of Halliday's functional grammar and uses news discourse as English textbooks. It is from this perspective that exploring the potential value and effectiveness of news audio-visual teaching. It is of theoretical significance for the research of news audio-visual teaching.

Today is the era of global integration. With the deep cooperation between countries, more and more international talents are needed. English is the common language of most countries, and learning English is important to both the development of oneself and society. We no longer only want to train English talents who just understand words and do reading. We also hope to cultivate talents who are comprehensively developed in all aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, it is very important to train students' listening and speaking ability. This project is to study an innovative and effective audio-visual teaching model to improve the communication skills of college students. It is of practical significance for the development of the cultivation of English talents and the innovation of teaching methods.

## **3. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND RELATIVE THEORIES**

This section introduces three major parts. Part one is an overview of Halliday's functional grammar theory. The second part is an introduction about the definition of discourse. Part three clarifies the definition of English news.

### **3.1. Functional Grammar Theory**

Halliday (1994) provides a systemic functional grammar to create a theoretical framework for

discourse analysis. Halliday's functional thoughts are embodied in pure theoretical functional thoughts, systematic thoughts, hierarchical thoughts and functional thoughts. About pure theoretical functional thoughts, Halliday (1994) believes that the nature of language determines people's requirements for language, that is, the functions that language must perform. This is called "pure function" or "yuan function", which is inherent in the use of a language. Pure theoretical functions include three aspects: 1. Language is the reflection of the processes and things that exist in the subjective and objective world, which is the "experiential function", or the function of the "content". 2. Language is a meaningful activity of a social person, a means of doing things, an action. Therefore, one of its functions must reflect the relationship between people. This pure function is called the "interpersonal function". 3. The basic unit of language in actual use is not a word or a sentence, but a "text" that expresses a relatively complete thought. The last part of the above two functions must be organized by the speaker into a text. Years of discourse analysis practice tells us that Halliday's systemic functional grammar is a theory more suitable for discourse analysis than other theories. It not only has a strict theoretical framework, but also has strong operability and practicability.

### 3.2. Discourse and English News

A discourse is a natural language that is not completely constrained by sentence grammar and represents complete semantics in a certain context. It usually refers to a linguistic whole of a series of consecutive segments or sentences, which should have semantic consistency, logical rationality and formal coherence. (Hu, 1994) One of the hallmarks of the book is the close integration of cohesion with coherent research and discourse analysis. And take the chapter on physicality as an example. Hu believes that the subjective world to be reflected in people's minds is nothing more than six processes. These processes do not occur in a vacuum, they involve a certain entity (participant), time, space and mode (environmental factors), which is transitivity. Transitivity reflects the coherence of discourse by the relationship between the internal process of the sentence and the participants; more importantly, the same process is concentrated and reflects the characteristics of the discourse.

English news refers to the recent occurrence of novelty or social value in society, or although it is not a recent event, but it has an important influence in the historical process of human society. (Zhang, 2010:12) It is the sum of the events and materials which has the English language teaching value reported by the news media of English-speaking countries. We can see that news should at least have the following characteristics: novelty, social value, and being reported or spread through various media. For example, if the US news and reporting materials were used for the three-year period after the US President Barack Obama took the oath of office, the incident itself did not meet the timeliness we stated, but we still call it news because it is the material which has a typical English language and listening teaching value. This paper let me know what is English news and others' understanding to English news.

### 3.3. Discourse Analysis Theories

Discourse research is an interface problem. It is therefore a multi-dimensional study. For a long time, language researchers have learned from language philosophy structural linguistics, functional linguistics social semiotics, critical linguistics, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, etc. From a perspective to study discourse, each interface of discourse research contains different theoretical perspectives and presents a multidimensional interface. From the discourse type, it can be divided into oral discourse and written discourse, literary discourse and non-literary discourse. From the perspective of textual cohesion, there are five kinds of cohesive means: referential, substitution, omission, connection, lexical cohesion. There are other categories and so on.

## 4. A STUDY OF COLLEGE ENGLISH AUDIO-VISUAL TEACHING

In this chapter, it includes methodology, findings and analysis of English audio-visual teaching.

### 4.1. Methodology

This section introduces the research questions, the participants and procedures English audio-visual teaching survey.

#### 4.1.1. Research Questions

College English audio-visual course is a very important course in college English teaching. It trains and enhances the English listening and speaking ability of college students through a combination of

vision and hearing. News audio-visual teaching should be an crucial part of English audio-visual teaching. Therefore, in order to know about the situation of English news audio-visual teaching in the real classroom and conduct the next research and discussion, it is very necessary to make relevant investigations. So this study aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the current situation of news audio-visual in college English audio-visual teaching?
- (2) Is it important to use discourse analysis for English news audio-visual teaching?
- (3) Can English news audio-visual teaching based on discourse analysis better improve college students' communicative competence?

*4.1.2. The Participants*

The subjects in the present study were 85 students from Zhejiang Ocean University. The following are the statistics on frequency of some variables. The 21 students whose age ranged from 20 to 22 had the highest percentage. There were 30 sophomores and 55 juniors. 50 of students were female and 35 male. 37 of students were English major and 48 non-English major.

*4.1.3. The Procedures of English Audio-Visual Teaching Survey*

The questionnaire investigation was divided into four parts: questionnaire design, questionnaire distribution, questionnaire recovery and questionnaire analysis. First, the author identified the research questions through extensive reading of relevant literature, and then designed a high-quality questionnaire through reflection and multiple revisions. Then the questionnaire was distributed in two forms: online posting and paper distribution. The students invited to participate in the survey are students from Zhejiang Ocean University who are attending or have taken college English audio-visual course. The questionnaire's requirement is writing the appropriate answer before each question number. After a period of time, the questionnaire is recovered with the effective amount counted. Finally, using Excel and SPSS analyzes questionnaire.

**4.2. Findings and Analysis of College English Audio-visual Teaching**

This part is findings and analysis which analyzes the data of questionnaire and the discussion of results. It is the major part for the whole paper. In this chapter, the functions and effects of news discourse analysis will be stressed.

*4.2.1. Findings of College English Audio-Visual Teaching Questionnaires*

**Question 1: Do you have news audio-visual in your college English audio-visual course?**

**Table1**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. It takes a lot of time.	6	7.06%
B. Yes, and it occupies more time	31	36.47%
C. Yes, but it takes a little time.	44	51.76%
D. No	4	4.71%

The time that students of Zhejiang Ocean University spend on news audio-visual course is not very much. 51.76% students think they take a little time to contact with English news. It shows little attention paid on English news audio-visual learning by teachers and students.

**Question 2: What textbooks do the teachers choose for news audio-visual teaching?**

**Table2**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Audio-visual news textbooks	32	37.65%
B. Materials downloaded by teachers online	12	14.12%
C. Latest news videos	9	10.59%
D. Listening news like VOA,BBC	32	37.65%

Traditional English news audio-visual teaching usually uses conventional textbooks (37.65%) or materials like VOA, BBC (37.65%). However, both for students and teachers, the news textbooks are outdated and boring, and VOA, BBC materials sometimes are difficult for students to learn because of fast speed. Therefore, they are not suitable for English news audio-visual teaching.

**Question 3: What is the reason why English news makes you feel difficult in the process of news audio-visual?**

**Table3**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A News is played too fast	34	40%
B. The sentence structure in the news is too long	10	11.76%
C. Too many unknown English words	14	16.47%
D. Do not know the Background of news discourse	27	31.76%

From the statistics we can know, fast speed of news broadcasting (40%) and less knowledge of English news background (31.76%) are the two main reasons for students to learn English news. Fast speed of news will make students miss the opportunity to capture information they need and cause troubles for them. Lack of background knowledge may let students do not know what they are listening and cannot answer questions.

**Question 4: What are your habits during English news audio-visual?**

**Table4**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Listen only by ear, not by notes	10	11.76%
B. Make efforts to understand the meaning of each sentence	5	5.88%
C. Write down key words while listening	28	32.94%
D. Strive to understand the general meaning of the whole news	42	49.41%

A large part of students believe understanding the general meaning of texts is more necessary. Besides, many of them develop a good habit to write down key words while listening.

**Question 5: Do you think it is necessary for teachers to supplement as much as possible the background knowledge of economy, culture and politics of other countries in news audio-visual classes?**

**Table5**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. It's very necessary.	25	29.41%
B. Be necessary	54	63.53%
C. Uncertain	3	3.53%
D. No need	3	3.53%

Most students have realized the importance of background knowledge. Because it will make an effort on their competence of English news listening.

**Question 6: Understand each sentence or the whole text in the process of news audio-visual, do you think which is more important?**

**Table6**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. It's more important to understand every sentence.	6	7.06%
B. Understanding the whole text is more important	54	63.53%
C. Both are important.	25	29.41%
D. Neither is important.	0	0%

Integrity of texts should be paid much attention. A lot of students agree with this point of view.

**Question 7: In order to improve students' listening and speaking ability more effectively, do you think it is important to cultivate students' discourse awareness in news audio-visual? (Discourse awareness: Teachers let students know that the presence of unknown words, sentences or even parts of the content in a news discourse does not necessarily affect the comprehension of the whole discourse.)**

**Table7**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very important	24	28.24%
B. Important	54	63.53%
C. A little important	6	7.06%
D. Not important	1	1.18%



Almost all students believe that discourse awareness is important to listening English news. It develops students' entirety and inspire them to consider problems from the whole texts. In this way, students do not need to struggle with some words they don't understand.

**Question 8: Do you agree that the overall performance of news discourse can help listeners guess a few words and sentences that they do not understand?**

**Table8**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very agree	27	31.76%
B. Agree	50	58.82%
C. A little bit of agreement	3	3.53%
D. Disagree	5	5.88%

From the data, students agree that the overall performance of news discourse contributes understanding of text meanings. The narrow language environment and the general context created by the discourse provide a basis for listeners to guess a few incomprehensible words and sentences.

**Question 9: Do you agree that developing news discourse awareness can help students overcome tension and anxiety?**

**Table9**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very agree	19	22.35%
B. Agree	57	67.06%
C. A little bit of agreement	6	7.06%
D. Disagree	3	3.53%

To overcome tension and anxiety, most students think that developing news discourse awareness is a crucial factor. In this way, they can speculate unknown words and answer questions.

**Question 10: Do you agree that news discourse teaching can help students better listen to English news, thus improving their listening and speaking abilities?**

**Table10**

option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very agree	23	27.06%
B. Agree	53	62.35%
C. A little bit of agreement	5	5.88%
D. Disagree	4	4.71%

The English news audio-visual teaching based on discourse analysis is an innovative way to improve English listening and speaking abilities. Most students support this idea and are willing to have a try.

#### 4.2.2. The Condition of English Audio-visual Teaching

Some researches are made to realize the current situation of news audio-visual teaching in the college English audio-visual courses. Huang (2016:134) made a survey that with the advancement of the CET4 and CET6 reforms, English news has replaced the traditional short dialogue and has become an important part of the listening comprehension test, accounting for 8% of the whole test questions and 22.86% of the listening comprehension part. It indicates English news listening is paid much attention nowadays. College students will be tested more on English communication skills. In addition, Zeng (2017:138) has shown that at present, there are fewer training classes of college English listening and speaking for students. Students can not have more time to train in the classroom. Moreover, college English audio-visual teaching is mainly based on listening whose content is often a textbook for teaching materials. Therefore, College English audio-visual teaching has not achieved the interaction of listening and speaking. Although students' listening has improved, the ability to speak is still poor.

On the other hand, according to Fang (2008:173), the speed of speech in college English listening discourse essays is 150 to 170 words per minute (taking CET4 listening as an example). Voice information does not have the spatial form like text information. It only appears in chronological order and cannot be reversed. Consequently, if the previous information is not captured, it will bring difficulties to the subsequent processing of information. While under the real English news listening situation, students indeed face the problem that they can not follow the listening contents because of their fast speed.

#### *4.2.3. The Functions of Discourse Integrity*

Fang (2008:173) also proposes that there is a cultural background difference in shared knowledge between the speaker (speech material) and the listener. To solve this problem, Zeng (2017:138) thinks that it is necessary to make full use of the current TV English news program and build a bridge between domestic TV news programs and foreign TV news programs. It, from the shallower to the deeper, can gradually strengthen students' listening and speaking ability. The advantage of TV news programs is that they can let students know the relevant background knowledge. Through the understanding of background knowledge, students can easily accept the specific content of English news. Therefore, supplementing the other countries' background knowledge of economy, culture and politics as much as possible is important and necessary for college students.

Du (2016:85) believes that the content of English news listening comprehension can't be just a single sentence and word patchwork. The whole process of communication should be the process of conveying some kind of information. Discourse is the carrier of information. The listener must not blindly understand the content of the listening from the level of words and sentences. To achieve a complete understanding, there is no doubt that the listener should be based on the meaning of the text. Discourse analysis is especially important in the comprehension of the new CET4 listening questions. As the results shown in the questionnaire (Table 6), understanding the whole discourse is more necessary than only understanding the sentences.

Fang (2008:173) emphasizes that the context provided by the holistic text facilitates students to overcome the difficulty of listening to words and sentences. For a sentence in a short essay, the discourse is undoubtedly a large context. The narrow language environment and the general context created by the discourse provide a basis for listeners to guess a few incomprehensible words and sentences. From the data collected, we can see many students agree with him.

#### *4.2.4. The Effects of Discourse Awareness to Anxiety*

About the anxiety during English news listening, Zhang (2010:24) has made a survey and discusses that a large percentage of students who feel anxious before listening to English news. Anxiety may be one reason why students cannot understand English news content well. Fang (2008:173) suggests teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' discourse awareness in teaching. In this way, students can truly establish a psychological advantage, overcome anxiety, and lay a good foundation for reasonable speculation and prediction using textual features. From the theory and data results, we can draw a conclusion that developing discourse awareness is beneficial to students' anxiety in the English listening.

Ren (2002:29) proposes to introduce discourse theory into listening teaching. By using discourse knowledge to ameliorate English listening teaching, students can improve their listening and speaking ability. It provides the evidence which is consistent with the questionnaire results for us.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

After this research, the data findings and analysis above reveal four findings. Firstly, Chinese college audio-visual teaching still needs to be improved and innovated. It does not achieve the interaction of listening and speaking. Yet students are not good at English communication. Next, emphasizing integrity of texts is important. When students do a English news audio-visual exercise, the integrity of texts can let them learn background knowledge before the exercise and help them know the general meaning of texts. What is more, some difficult and recondite words and sentences will be guessed by the whole structure. As for discourse awareness, it is relevant to tension and anxiety during the English news listening. Developing students' discourse awareness will make an effort to establish a psychological advantage, reduce even overcome anxiety. Students can according to textual features make a reasonable speculation and prediction. Finally, whether from statistics or from scholars' views, introducing discourse analysis theory into English news audio-visual teaching is indeed beneficial to cultivation of English communication skills.

Since this study is limited by human, material and financial resources, only some students from Zhejiang Ocean University were selected to conduct questionnaires, which may affect the universality of the study because of the composition of participants. If we can expand the scope of research and the object of investigation, the research will be more representative.

In the future research, I hope that the subjects can be chosen from different universities. Increasing the number of subjects will minimize the unilateral impact on the research caused by the few subjects

selected. In addition, if other experienced scholars can conduct a more in-depth investigation and research on the English news audio-visual teaching based on discourse analysis, I think it will benefit more teachers and students and improve Chinese college students' English communication ability.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The reform and development of College English audio-visual teaching has been going on all the time. I can't say that the research I have done contributes greatly to English teaching and the cultivation of college students. However, it is certain that starting from English news audio-visual teaching based on discourse analysis, it can provide a useful way to help college students improve their listening and speaking ability and thus cultivate their comprehensive English ability. With the continuous development of science and technology, multimedia-based news audio-visual teaching will become an important teaching method in foreign language learning.

This paper presents a relatively innovative perspective. It studies the advantages and feasibility of using English news with timeliness and rigorous structure to teach which based on text analysis. I believe this will put forward some ideas and contribute a little to the English audio-visual teaching in Chinese universities.

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