Investigation and Analysis on the Oral Expression Competence of Students in Second-tier Universities— Based on China’s Standards of English Language Ability

ABSTRACT
By adopting quantitative analysis, based on the statements for oral scale of CSE (China Standards of English) level five, this paper investigated the current status, common difficulties and control factors on oral English competence of non-English majors in second-tier universities, which was done by questionnaires including six dimensions of language expression: accuracy, complexity, coherence, fluency, appropriateness and flexibility. The results showed that: (1) the overall oral English competence of college non-English majors hasn’t met the statements of CSE level five; (2) female students are significantly better than male students, business majors are significantly better than liberal arts majors who are significantly better than science majors; (3) there is no significant difference between grades. (4) the flexibility, coherence, accuracy of language expression almost achieved the line, the common core difficulties mainly reflected in pronunciation, the scope of language expression, fluency and appropriateness. And unclear goals, less practice and low amount of accumulation were major impact factors. The research is helpful for strengthening students’ knowledge on their own oral English competence as well as adjusting their oral practice objectives, help teachers know students’ actual oral English proficiency, clarify and refine the teaching objectives of speaking and promote the effective practice of oral English as well as the rational application of CSE.

INTRODUCTION
With the rapid development of economy and promotion of the "One Belt And One Road" policy, college graduates' oral language proficiency has been constantly concerned from society. In 2018, China’s Standards of English Language Ability (CSE) was issued, which takes application as the primary goal of language learning and puts oral expression ability into assessment. Chinese learners’ English competence in the CSE is classified into three stages and nine levels. Level 5 and level 6 correspond to non-English major college students (NEMCS), which are roughly equivalent to the primary and intermediate requirements of College English Curriculum Requirements (Requirements) (Liu Jianda 2017; Jin Yanjie Wei 2020). The CSE lays emphasis on science, practicality and operation (Liu Jianda, Peng Chuan 2017), which is a yardstick to measure English ability of domestic students as well as an instruction for English teaching (Wang Shouren, 2018). The speaking scale of China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE-SS) gives a reference not only for oral English teaching but also assessment at various stages in China. Current research of CSE-SS mainly focuses on four aspects: discussion on principles and methods of the scale construction (Yan, Wei 2017); exploration on “can-do” descriptors (Huizhong, et al. 2011; Jiemin 2013; Yan, Wei 2017); research on integration

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between test and the scale (Wei, 2019); and study of its validity (Wang Hua, 2020) and influence on the test construct validity (Xiaoyi, Yan 2019). So far little empirical research has been undertaken on the application of language proficiency scales. Using CSE-SS as an example, Jin and Jie (2020) discusses the major challenges by its application, proposes a framework and sets out a research agenda for the CSE-SS impact studies. Based on the CSE-SS, the study is to evaluate the current situation of non-English major college students' oral English competence and explore the characteristics, helping learners' self-assessment and self-reflection of their strengths and weaknesses for oral expression as well as teachers' adjustment on teaching objectives, content and methods, providing an empirical basis for the future practice and exploration of oral scale.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study on the process and competence for oral expression has always been greatly concerned in psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, second language acquisition and other disciplines (Lifei, Dandan 2004), and oral expression is regarded as an integral unity as well as a procedural and holistic concept in cognitive vision (Bygate 1987; Levelt, 1999; Kormos, 2006). According to the theory of communicative language competence (Bachman 1990; Fulcher 2003; Bachman & Palmer 2010), language competence includes the language knowledge mastered by language users and the strategic ability to guide and monitor language communication, and the acquisition of language knowledge and strategy is an important criterion to distinguish speakers of different levels. Bachman (1990) defined communicative language competence as "the ability to make proper use of knowledge to communicate in specific situation". Huizhong et al. (2012) defined oral English competence as "the ability to use oral English to communicate and complete communicative tasks in specific occasions".

International research on speaking of Second Language mainly focuses five aspects (Leather 1999; 1) Development of phonology; 2) Learners’ ability of listening and speaking and its relationship; 3) Factors affecting oral learning of second language learners, such as attitude, motivation and social environment; 4) Transferring of native language from the perspective of language change, variation and marker; 5) Research on oral English teaching, including learning and thought process, communication strategies, classroom teaching and assessing. Up to now, the above five research topics are still the focus, which mainly concentrate on the results of oral expression, rather than analyzing the problems in the development process based on the detailed description of the oral development process of the second language learners. China started late on the study of oral expression of Second language, but has attracted much attention of researchers (Suxian Sun Yan 2015; Qiner 2011), and meanwhile, they began to rethink foreign language education (Rongguang, 2013). The study of oral expression of Second language mainly covers four fields: 1) Establishing the theoretical model of spoken language development; 2) Research on effective forms of oral English evaluation (Jienda 2010; Li Ying, Dandan 2016); 3) Explore the characteristics and regular patterns of expression (Jinting, Jiayi 2018); 4) Improvement of teaching methods (Lifei, Dandan 2004; Pingwen, 2008; Suqin, Jinmei 2010; Na, Weihua 2014). In addition, it has attracted much attention from scholars, such as the development of fluency, accuracy and complexity for oral expression (Martin East 2016; Hanjing 2020), communication strategies and Individual differences (Weiqin 2016), thinking process of oral expression, controlling factors for oral ability (Tang Wenli 2005; Zhang Junying 2006; Liu Zhongzheng 2009; Haizhen 2019; Jiaxin, Shaoqian 2016; Jiaxin 2019), etc. However, the objects of the above study were mainly freshmen (majors/non-majors) and middle school students, rarely focusing on sophomores and juniors. Few concerned the learning needs of college students at different levels for oral expression (Rongguang, 2013). And fewer researches evaluated the current situation and core problems of students' oral proficiency based on CSE, which mostly focus on the fluency, accuracy and complexity of oral expression. Skehan (1996) believes that "fluency", "accuracy" and "complexity" are the basic indicators to evaluate oral proficiency. Crookes (1989) and Wigglesworth (1997) argue that the validity of communication can be judged by examining the accuracy of grammar use in learners' oral expressions. According to Huizhong et al. (2011), for a comprehensive description of the spoken language ability, it should commence with the accuracy (phonology, grammar), richness (vocabulary, syntax), coherence (use of connection means), fluency (the length of the continuous speech), appropriateness (effective participation) and flexibility (use of communication strategy).

Based on the "can do" statement for oral Expression of CSE level 5, this study is to explore the current situation of oral English ability of NEMCS from Chinese second-tier universities, discusses the core
issues and influencing factors of the development of their oral English ability and analyze the central
difficulties and contributing factors, providing suggestions for oral English development of domestic
non-English major college students from second-tier universities.

THE STUDY

Before the study, 575 subjects were investigated for their learning behaviors and learning
environment. According to the survey, 99.73% of them have at least one smart phone; 99.46% have
ever used mobile phone apps of English learning; 95.12% think spoken English is very important;
95.93% hope to improve their oral expression ability, of which 13.27% have a short-period experience
of speaking English abroad. College students in the new era have more accesses to the shared
resources, with excellent resources and better conditions for oral English learning and practice.

Research Questions

Based on SA and the sub-scales for oral expression of the CSE, this study is to analyze NEM college
students’ current status of oral English ability and common difficulties, to explore the main factors
restricting the development of their oral ability. The study intends to answer the following three
questions: 1) what is the current situation on oral English ability of NEM college students? Are there
significant differences between genders, grades and majors? 2) What problems do NEM College
students have in their oral English ability? 3) What are the main factors affecting their development of
oral English ability?

Participants

Participants of the study are 575 NEM Chinese students (the second- and third-year) (NEMCS) from
second-tier universities (in region of Pearl River Delta, the inland city of Changsha and the western
region of Guangdong province, including 133 junior students who have finished all four books learning
of College English and 442 sophomores who are learning College English Book III at the time of this
study. Students’ score of Gaokao is higher than enrollment cut-off point of the university and have
been learning English as a second language. Students have participated in self- and peer- assessment
and received relevant training and guidance.

Research Methodology

The study adopts the methods which mainly include questionnaire and semi-structured interview.
The questionnaire is designed based on the “can do” statements of self-assessment (SA) scale and
sub-scales for oral expression of the CSE level 5 without destroying the contents of original descriptors.
Studies have shown that self-assessment can effectively acquire the situation of English proficiency of
second language learners (Blanche & Merino 1989; Ross, 1998; Luoma, 2012). And self-assessment is
a reliable and effective way to test students’ communicative language competence. Compared with
students’ own listening and reading abilities, students can more accurately assess their own speaking
and writing abilities (Jianda, 2002). The questionnaire is composed of two parts. Part One is about the
participants’ basic information (as shown in Table 1), consisting of gender, major and grade. Part Two
is the body of questionnaire, 29 items included which covered six dimensions of features of oral
expression: accuracy, breadth, fluency, coherence, appropriateness and flexibility. The study of
features for oral expression is of great practical significance for teaching and testing (Jin Yan, Jie Wei
2017). Subjects were asked to tick only one choice on each item on a five-point Likert Scale ranging
from one (never true for me) through two (usually not true for me), three (somewhat true for me) and
four (usually true for me) to five (always true for me). The self-assessment score was the sum of the
responses: the higher the score was, the more accurate the language expression was and the richer the
sentence pattern, as well as the more the fluency, the better the coherence, the more appropriate the
language, the more the flexibility. It showed the higher the oral expression ability.
To have more detailed and accurate results of quantitative analysis, the paper also adopts the method of interview. Randomly draw 5 students in eight classes out of 16 involved in the survey, a total of 40 including sophomores and juniors. The interview focused on three aspects: 1) How about the respondents’ attitude towards oral English learning, self-assessment oral English ability and the expectation of improvement? 2) What are the ways for practice and the practice length per week? 3) What are the big difficulties in expressing personal views in English?

**Data Collection**

A total of 575 NEM college students were surveyed by online questionnaire on the platform of Wenjuanxing. The link of the questionnaire was forwarded to the students by English teachers in these universities. 575 questionnaires were collected and 422 were valid. Use SPSS19.0 software to have descriptive statistics analysis, T-test and ANOVA.

To test the credibility of the data and ensure the scientific conclusions, the study adopts Cronbach α reliability coefficient and factor load coefficient test to verify the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. From the results of reliability Test in Table 2, coefficient values of all six dimension are greater than 0.8, the minimum value is 0.812, which could be used for further analysis. The CITC values corresponding to the analytical terms are greater than 0.7. There is a good correlation between the analysis items. Exploratory factors are used to test validity, 29 items of the questionnaire are classified into 6 dimensions. The results shows all common values for validity test of all items are greater than 0.5, information can be effectively extracted; KMO is 0.970 (>0.8), Bartlett spherical test results are significant (Sig.=0.000), the value of CPV is 73.370% (>50%). Most item information are extracted by six dimensions, which shows the research data has good structural validity. The result of confirmatory factor analysis proved the AVE values for each dimension are greater than 0.5, and CR values all are greater than 0.7, which shows a good aggregation validity of the data.

**FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

**The Current Situation of Participants’ Oral Expression Ability**

*Participants’ Overall Results of Oral Expression Competence*

Conducting descriptive statistical analysis of the survey results, there’s no exception value in the data. The mean value of six dimensions on oral ability (accuracy, scope, coherence, fluency, appropriateness and flexibility) can be described and analyzed. As stated in Table 3, the mean of each dimension (between 2.498 and 2.931) and the questionnaire (2.762) is lower than the average score (3.0), and
the standard deviation is less than one. It shows the subjects’ overall level of oral expression competence are in the lower level of the scale and has not yet reached the CSE level 5, but flexibility (2.931), consistency (2.841) and accuracy (2.819) of expression are almost to the level. The scores of appropriateness (2.779), fluency (2.705) and scope (2.499) are low, which are still far from the statements of CSE level 5. In particular, the scope of oral expression needed to be improved urgently. The maximum value also indicates that the scope and fluency of the subjects’ oral expression are the ability items that need to be paid attention to.

| DIMENSIONS | NUMBER OF ITEMS | N   | MINIMUM VALUE | MAXIMUM VALUE | AVERAGE | STANDARD DEVIATION |
|------------|-----------------|-----|---------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1. ACCURACY| 7               | 422 | 1.000         | 4.714         | 2.819   | .658              |
| 2. BREADTH | 4               | 422 | 1.000         | 4.500         | 2.498   | .666              |
| 3. COHERENCE| 4              | 422 | 1.000         | 4.500         | 2.841   | .676              |
| 4. FLUENCY | 5               | 422 | 1.000         | 4.600         | 2.705   | .691              |
| 5. APPROPRIAT-NESS | 3 | 422 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.779       | .735 |
| 6. FLEXIBILITY| 6             | 422 | 1.000         | 5.000         | 2.931   | .708              |
| TOTAL      | 29              | 422 | 1.000         | 4.719         | 2.762   | .689              |

Differences among Participants of Different Genders, Grades and Majors

The data is normally distributed by test, T test can be used to analyze the difference between two sets of data. There is no significant difference (P > 0.05) between participants of different genders, grades and majors on the dimension of flexibility, appropriateness, accuracy, fluency, coherence, and breadth by F test, which shows the sample is relatively concentrated with homogeneity of variance, analysis of variance (ANOVA) can be performed.

As is shown in Table 4, there are significant differences (P<0.01) in five dimensions (flexibility, appropriateness, fluency, consistency and accuracy) among students of different genders: the mean of girls which almost come to the statement of CSE level 5 is higher than that of boys, who have more space for improvement. But there is no significant difference (P>0.05) in the expression of breadth, girls’ is slightly better than that of boys. More attention should be paid to boys.

| DIMENSIONS | GENDER (MEAN ± STANDARD DEVIATION) | t   | P   |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|
|            | FEMALE (N=336)                    |     |     |
|            | MALE (N=86)                       |     |     |
| Flexibility| 2.98±0.70                         | 2.73±0.71 | 3.00 | .003** |
| Appropriateness | 2.83±0.72                     | 2.59±0.75 | 2.76 | .006** |
| Fluency    | 2.75±0.68                         | 2.53±0.69 | 2.60 | .009** |
| Coherence  | 2.90±0.70                         | 2.63±0.69 | 3.15 | .002** |
| Scope      | 2.53±0.67                         | 2.38±0.64 | 1.79 | .074   |
| Accuracy   | 2.88±0.64                         | 2.58±0.69 | 3.75 | .000** |

p<0.05** p<0.01

Table 5 shows there are significant differences in ability of six dimensions among students of different majors (P<0.05): the mean of business students is higher than that of arts students whose is higher than that of science students, which means oral expression competence of business students (mean value is 2.91) is more close to CSE level 5, comparing with art students. While science students with a much lower mean (2.64) need pay more efforts. All the participants score the lowest on the breadth and fluency, but business and art students are better than science ones. Concerning for science students is needed.
Table 5 Professional Differences in Oral English Ability of Non-major College Students

| DIMENSIONS | PROFESSION                      | MEAN ± STD | F   | p    |
|------------|---------------------------------|------------|-----|------|
|            | BUSINESS (N=52)                  |            |     |      |
|            | ARTS (N=179)                    |            |     |      |
|            | SCIENCE (N=191)                 |            |     |      |
| Flexibility| 3.08±0.74                       | 3.01±0.70  | 2.81±0.70 | 5.139 | .006**|
| Appropriateness | 2.82±0.75               | 2.90±0.73  | 2.66±0.72 | 5.186 | .006**|
| Fluency    | 2.87±0.71                       | 2.76±0.68  | 2.61±0.68 | 4.111 | .017* |
| Coherence  | 2.95±0.75                       | 2.85±0.65  | 2.65±0.66 | 6.271 | .002**|
| Scope      | 2.73±0.75                       | 2.55±0.67  | 2.39±0.61 | 6.295 | .002**|
| Accuracy   | 3.01±0.73                       | 2.90±0.61  | 2.69±0.66 | 7.02  | .001**|

Table 6 shows there's no significant difference (P>0.05) between different grades on the abilities of six dimensions. The mean of junior students (2.84) is slightly higher than that of sophomores (2.74), indicating that oral expression competence of junior students is slightly better than that of sophomores, but both down to CSE level 5. Whether taking college English courses or not has no obvious promotion on the development of oral English ability.

Table 6 Grade differences in oral English ability of non-major college students

| DIMENSIONS | GRADE                      | (AVERAGE ± STD) | t  | p    |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----|------|
|            | JUNIOR (N=101)            |                 |    |      |
|            | SOPHOMORE (N=321)         |                 |    |      |
| Flexibility| 3.04±0.66                 | 2.90±0.72       | 1.739 | .083 |
| Appropriateness | 2.87±0.70               | 2.75±0.74       | 1.452 | .147 |
| Fluency    | 2.77±0.67                 | 2.68±0.70       | 1.127 | .26  |
| Coherence  | 2.92±0.63                 | 2.81±0.73       | 1.453 | .148 |
| Scope      | 2.59±0.66                 | 2.47±0.67       | 1.619 | .106 |
| Accuracy   | 2.87±0.63                 | 2.80±0.67       | 0.968 | .334 |

Problems of NEM College Students’ Oral Expression Ability

Comparing the average value of six dimensions for oral expression ability of the subjects (Figure 1), it shows scope, fluency and appropriateness of oral expression of NEMCS need to be improved urgently, scope of expression (2.5) requires the most attention, followed by fluency (2.70) and appropriateness (2.78). According to the data in Figure 2, figure 3 and Figure 4, the group in need of urgent improvement of scope is the female students of science sophomore (mean value: 2.57,2.47, 2.39, respectively), while the group who need urgent improvement of both fluency and appropriateness is the male students of science sophomore (mean value: 2.57,2.68,2.61, respectively). 2.89, 2.75, 2.66). In general, the oral English ability of non-English majors from the second-tier universities has not reached CSE level 5; flexibility, accuracy and consistency of oral expression almost come to the statements, while scope, fluency and appropriateness are in a pressing situation to be improved.
Figure 1: Comparison of dimensional averages

Figure 2: Comparison of different genders on six dimensions

Figure 3: Comparison of different grades on six dimensions

Figure 4: Comparison of different specialties on six dimensions
Flexibility of Oral Expression

As shown in Table 4, the mean value of flexibility dimension factors is relatively stable, and the total average of all factors (2.931) is close to the mean score (3.0), indicating that participants are at an average level in flexibility of oral expression. The standard deviation (>0.800) indicates there's difference between students. Among the six factors (in Table 4), the score of "being able to solve communication difficulties through inquiry and body language" (3.156) is slightly higher than the average (3.0), which shows in the discussion of familiar topics, participants can adopt appropriate expression strategies to assist communication. For example, they can check whether listeners have understood their talk by asking follow-up questions and confirm whether their utterance has been understood; can make accurate use of non-verbal cues such as body language in accordance with the situation and communicative needs; can solve difficulties in communication and initiate, continue as well as end conversations naturally.

| DISCUSSION FAMILIAR TOPICS | ON | MINIMUM VALUE | MAXIMUM VALUE | AVERAGE | STANDARD DEVIATION | TOTAL AVERAGE |
|-----------------------------|----|----------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|--------------|
| Can take appropriate measures (e.g. inquiry, body language) to solve communication difficulties | 422 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 3.156 | .882 |

Accuracy and Coherence of Oral Expression

Table 5 shows participants' almost have correct pronunciation (2.896) and natural intonation (2.775) in daily English communication, but they are weak at the use of phonological knowledge in oral expression such as stress, liaison, reduced voice and loss of plosion (2.611). Vocabulary competence (2.846) is slightly higher than that of use of sentence structures (2.784), but they're easy to make mistakes in verb tense in oral expression (2.796). Almost can clearly and orderly use simple conjunctions to link phrases and sentences (2.905) as well as transitional sentences to organize discourse (2.934), but there are some difficulties in achieving semantic coherence through sentence transformation in oral expression (2.664) due to the lack of textual knowledge and single cohesive devices.

| DISCUSSION FAMILIAR TOPICS | ON | MINIMUM VALUE | MAXIMUM VALUE | AVERAGE | STANDARD DEVIATION |
|-----------------------------|----|----------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|
| Can correctly read words | 42 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.896 | .911 |
| Can appropriately use stressed, liaison, reduced voice and loss of plosion | 42 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.611 | .856 |
| Natural intonation | 42 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.775 | .890 |

Table 4 Characteristics of Language Flexibility of Non-Professional College Students

Table 5 Characteristics of Accuracy and Coherence of Language Expression on Non-major College Students
Scope of Oral Expression

Table 6 shows the total mean of scope for oral expression (2.499) is much lower than the average score (3.0), which is the lowest among six dimensions. It can be seen that participants are seriously deficient in the application of highly complex sentence structures (2.509) and vocabulary (2.448) in oral expression. It is difficult for them whether simple sentence pattern (2.455) or complex (2.509), actually. Vocabulary learned in College English is poorly absorbed and cannot be well used, and participants are not good at using relevant words and phrases to discuss familiar topics (2.581), which indicates oral expression in daily communication mainly depends on words and phrases learned in primary and secondary schools. Syntactic complexity, especially the understanding and application of long sentences, is the weakest part of NEM college students among all six dimensions for oral expression. The low use frequency of complex vocabulary acquired in College English (2.448) suggests effectiveness of College English teaching deserves great attention of both students and teachers.

Fluency and Appropriateness of Oral Expression

Table 7 shows the mean value of each factor of fluency is low (2.705). When discussing familiar topics, participants can almost pronounce the words fluently (2.763), but require some pause time (2.777) and a certain times of errors’ self-correction (2.768). It’s difficult for them to communicate fluently for
a long time (2.600) without a certain amount of language repetition (2.616). The data from appropriateness factors analysis show that the subjects can almost use appropriate vocabulary to express politeness on specific occasions (2.827) and make simple communication in accordance with specific context (2.810), but there are certain difficulties in the proper use of language forms to express purposes and intentions (2.699), which shows language users lack of sociolinguistics knowledge and pragmatic functional knowledge, who cannot apply the knowledge to align linguistic forms with their corresponding intentions by identifying and selecting appropriate discourse to achieve their communicative purpose. Pragmatic ability is worrying.

Table 7 Characteristics of Language Fluency and Appropriateness in Non-Professional College Students

| DISCUSSION FAMILIAR TOPICS | ON | N | MINIMUM VALUE | MAXIMUM VALUE | AVERAGE | STANDARD DEVIATION |
|-----------------------------|----|---|---------------|---------------|---------|-------------------|
| F | Have a shorter pause in communication | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.777 | .911 |
| E | Can hold a longer time conversation | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.600 | .832 |
| C | Smooth word pronunciation | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.763 | .870 |
| Y | Less self-revised interventions | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.768 | .865 |
| Y | Seldom repeat in daily communication | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.616 | .773 |
| A | Can use appropriate language forms according to different circumstances | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.699 | .837 |
| A | Can use simple language to reply to different circumstances | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.810 | .873 |
| E | Can use polite words appropriately in communication | 42 | 2 | 1.000 | 5.000 | 2.827 | .875 |

Controlling Factors

To further understand the contributing factors of students’ oral expression ability, 20 participants and 8 teachers were interviewed. The participants were randomly classified into two groups, 10 for each, and 30 minutes together. The interview mainly focuses on three aspects: 1) students’ attitude, self-assessment and expectations to oral English learning; 2) Regular practice ways and weekly practice time; 3) the common difficulties when expressing opinion in English. Findings were concluded as follows:

(1) Most students have positive understanding for oral English learning.

93% of them think spoken English is very important and want to improve it. Only 11% think they can speak English well, 25% often speak actively, while less than 10% actively participate in oral English
activities (including CET-4 and CET-6 oral tests). This is because of weak oral expression and unable to do what they hope; less organization of oral expression activities and seldom practice in large class teaching. Some lack self-confidence, afraid of being laughed at for poor English, or is not interested in English. 45% expect to take oral English as selective courses in third- and fourth-year.

(2) Students lack of systematic phonological knowledge and have insufficient practice.

About 50% of the respondents practice English by mobile APP, but less than one hour a week; 25% practice through online audio and video; 20% practice by reciting and talking to themselves. Only 5% communicate in English with overseas students and Chinese friends on campus, mainly based on one-way input, and rare interactions, and serious time-shortage. It is consistent with the results of Jia (2004) on the key factors affecting the oral English ability of college freshmen. Enough time is needed for the development of foreign language competence (Bot, 2012), and some experts suggest 150-200 hours of learning should be added from the lower level to the higher level (Liu Jianda, 2017). College students in the new era share more online resources based on AI, with abundant resources and convenient conditions for oral English learning and practice. But lack of systematic phonological knowledge affects autonomous learning of spoken language based on artificial intelligence; traditional way of assessment leads to low practice motivation; delayed supervision makes it difficult for students to keep up.

(3) Low efficiency of classroom teaching and insufficient internalization of language knowledge.

90% of the participants think inadequate of lexical chunks and sentence structures prevents the richness of language use. But light emphasis on reading and writing and delayed consolidation of language knowledge; less reading and accumulation of lexical chunks as well as express opinions with thinking of mother-tongue are the hidden causes on the effectiveness of language production.

(4) Limited classroom oral activities and low coverage rate on students

90% of teachers attach importance to the development of students' oral expression competence and their own development. But teachers pay more attention to reading and writing in class because of students diversity for oral English and heavy teaching tasks. Activities of oral practice in class are limited and mainly based on the materials from textbook, with occasional supplementation and less interesting, which present in groups with limited time and low coverage rate on students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the scale for oral expression of the CSE level 5, this study mainly explores the current situation for oral expression competence of NEMCS (Second- and Third-year) from second-tier universities, and the differences between different majors, genders and grades through both questionnaire and interview, limiting factors are discussed. SPSS 19.0 is used for statistics analysis and have achieved the purpose of the study.

The oral expression ability of NEMCS from second-tier universities has not come to the CSE level 5. There are significant differences between genders and majors in students' oral expression ability: girls’ performance is better than that of boys; Business students are better than arts students, and arts students are better than science students. Junior students’ oral expression ability is slightly better than that of sophomore students, but there is no significant difference.

Among the six dimensions of oral English ability, the flexibility, accuracy and consistency almost reaches the statement of CSE 5. But the use of phonological knowledge is far from it, especially appropriately use stressed, liaison, reduced voice and loss of plosion in daily communication. Incorrect verb tenses and poor use of cohesive devices are common. Fluency and appropriateness barely meet the standard. But long pauses, times of self-correction and language repetition are regular, language application cannot be consistent with the specific context. Richness of language is not up to standard. Complex sentence structures and advanced vocabulary use are seriously inadequate, knowledge acquired in college English is in low absorption.

The main influencing factors are as follows: not encouraging English learning environment leading to less learning enthusiasm and low self-practice; Lack of phonological knowledge and insufficient internalization of language; Single classroom teaching model and not enough practical oral communication; Do not pay attention to oral practice and training and less practice opportunities;
Teaching evaluation is not specific, guidance and supervision is out of place. It is urgent to improve oral English teaching, and complexity, fluency and appropriateness of oral expression are the key points for the improvement of oral communication ability of non-English majors. Teachers can use CSE-SS to evaluate students' spoken language competence and clear the target of oral language teaching (Jin Yan, Jie Wei 2017). Based on the real needs of students, enrich teaching means, transform teaching methods, optimize curriculum setting and create a smart, effective classroom; Help students use the scale for self-evaluation and establish their learning goals (Liu Jianda, 2017); Pay attention to the combination of learning and application, promote application by learning and promote learning by evaluation (Wen Qiuang, 2016); Play the intermediary role of teachers, take production as the driving force, make scientific evaluation, guide students to selectively transform and absorb, and achieve the targets efficiently so as to improve the effectiveness of oral English classroom teaching as well as students' oral English practical ability, promoting the application and improvement of the scale.

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