

# Research on the Optimization of Oral Interaction Patterns in Chinese High School English Classrooms under the Guidance of TESL Methodology

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## Abstract:

Nowadays, Chinese high school oral English teaching is often constrained by an exam-oriented approach, suffering from insufficient classroom practice time and a lack of real situation communication problems, which create a gap between students' oral application ability and language learning goals. The TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) methodology which emphasizes contextualized input, interactive exercises, and the adaptation of learners' language needs. It can effectively address the shortcoming of traditional oral teaching and provide a scientific way to improve high school students' practical language application abilities. This article, based on the TESL methodology, focuses on and discusses the optimization research of oral interaction patterns in Chinese high school English classrooms. This article employs the method of literature analysis. The findings indicate that English teaching in Chinese high schools is deeply influenced by exam-oriented and teacher-centered problems. This causes students to be in a 'dumb English' situation. In order to change this situation, this paper has proposed improvements for each of the three stages of the teaching process.

**Keywords:** TESL methodology, oral English, Chinese High School English, exam-oriented, literature analysis

## 1. Introduction

Existing studies on Chinese high school oral English teaching highlight three key issues. According to He's 2025 research [1], traditional high school English classes remain predominantly teacher-centered,

with over 90% of class time spent on grammar explanations and vocabulary drills, while minimal time allocated to oral practice. Lin [2] identified that a significant number of students develop a fear of oral expression. This fear often arises from anxiety about

making mistakes or poor pronunciation, which further discourages their active participation. Wang [3] found that students do not have sufficient oral practice opportunities in class. This can lead to generally weak oral skills and fail to align with real-life communication requirements. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on these two questions: What is the analysis of the current situation and existing problems in English Oral Language Classes? What recommendations can be put forward to optimize oral interaction patterns from the perspective of TESL methodology? Guided by TESL methodology, this study specifically focuses on and discusses the optimization of oral interaction patterns in Chinese senior high school English classrooms, and adopts a literature analysis approach to achieve this objective, with the goal of addressing traditional teaching limitations and enhancing students' practical oral communication competence.

## 2. Analysis of the Current Situation and Problems of English Oral Communication Classes in Chinese High Schools

### 2.1 Current Situation

With the deep development in globalization and the increasing frequency of international exchanges, English is becoming the key to integrating into the world and playing a crucial role in cross-cultural communication. English as a tool to communicate, the most important thing is to help people freely exchange their ideas in different situations. However, from Zhou [4] and Bai [5], the phenomenon of 'dumb English' still stands out in Chinese high school English teaching today. A large number of students encounter various language output difficulties, such as pronunciation errors, speech blockages, grammatical confusion, and expression anxiety. This phenomenon, to some extent, indicates that the traditional English teaching model has failed to conform to the inherent laws of language learning. Currently, in high school English teaching, the focus is generally placed on knowledge input. Most of the class time is spent on grammar explanations, vocabulary memorization, and text interpretation, while oral training is often limited to isolated sentence practice without taking real-life scenarios into account. This has led to a certain disconnection between language learning and actual com-

munication needs.

### 2.2 Problem Analysis

The challenges encountered in high school English oral language teaching, such as inadequate oral English proficiency, disconnection between language learning and communication needs, and insufficient students' output ability. Essentially, it stems from a systematic mismatch between teaching practices, evaluation mechanisms, and the laws of language acquisition.

First of all, the out-of-time educational concepts have led to an emphasis on input over output. Krashen [6] proposed that the key to language acquisition lies in exposure to 'comprehensible input' ( $i+1$ ). That is, language materials slightly above the current level. However, the input provided in many classrooms remains insufficient. Many teachers are influenced by the weight of scores in the written components of the college entrance examination; They prioritize score improvement as the main goal and consider oral practice as a high-investment activity with slow short-term results. Furthermore, the class time is concentrated on grammar analysis and vocabulary memorization, while the 'input-output interaction' principle of language learning is ignored, leading to students possessing theoretical knowledge but lacking the ability to apply it.

Secondly, there are limitations in teachers' professional competencies and instructional approaches [7]. Some teachers have inaccurate pronunciation and inappropriate intonation, and lack systematic oral teaching training. As a result, they are unable to provide accurate language models and innovative teaching designs. Moreover, the current oral training mostly focuses on sentence drills or fixed text recitation, which is completely out of daily communication scenarios, such as topic-based discussions and service reservations. This mechanical practice cannot help students master practical rules and logical expression skills, and results in the inability to 'express themselves' in real life communication situations. Furthermore, students are facing both psychological and environmental barriers. Many students experience anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation. They fear being criticized for inaccurate pronunciation, grammatical mistakes, or stiff expression. This anxiety leads them to intentionally avoid oral English practice activities, creating a negative cycle: the more they avoid practice, the worse their oral skills become; the worse their oral skills become, the more afraid

they are to practice. Insufficient English communication scenarios out of classroom can also be a reason for why students feel nervous. Chinese is the main language for communication in students' daily life, so they have nearly no chance to use English in real situations. The coverage of extracurricular activities, such as the school English corner and speech competitions, have limited coverage. These activities cannot help students to practice their English in an immersive environment.

Last but not least, unbalanced assessment systems have further worsened the problem [8]. In most areas, the Gaokao (national college entrance exam) does not include oral English as a graded component. Even in a few areas where it is included, oral English scores carry minimal weight. This oriented directly leads schools and teachers to focus more on high-scoring written skills, reducing the time allocated to oral English instruction. Meanwhile, existing oral assessments (such as end-term oral tests) only prioritize accuracy in pronunciation and grammar, ignoring communication effectiveness factors like fluency, logical coherence, and cultural appropriateness. As a result, these assessments fail to reflect students' actual oral English proficiency and cannot provide targeted feedback for improvement.

### **3. Based on the TESL methodology perspective, suggestions for optimizing the oral interaction model**

#### **3.1 Pre-stage: Autonomous topic + personalized corpus, help to awake English thinking consciousness.**

The core of this stage is to allow students to prepare based on topics they are interested in, reducing their resistance to unfamiliar topics and helping them actively organize their thoughts in English.

Step 1:

Teachers can first give students some life-related topics (like their favorite movie, my weekend plan), and let students choose one, rather than a uniform topic. Students then need to list 2–3 key points to elaborate on their chosen topic. This helps students actively construct the logic of their English expression.

Step 2:

Then, teachers can provide thematic corpora to support

students in further elaborating on their chosen topic. These corpora can include practical sentence structures and lexical phrases. Students need to choose 1-2 new things from the thematic corpora and use them to explain their previous topic. For example, if a student chooses 'my favorite movie', then in the first step, he/she can say 'I like it because the main actor's performance is excellent.' 'The plot is engaging.'

Teachers can give sentence structures like 'In my view, the best part is...', 'The scene where...reminds me of myself, because I once...', or word phrases like 'plot twist', 'be worth watching'

This activity provides a low-anxiety environment, enabling students to think and express themselves more actively.

#### **3.2 While-stage: group discussion + problem driving, to active English thinking and expression**

The key lies in creating scenarios, facilitating student-centered interaction, and guiding students to use English to solve problems. In order to make English a tool for free communication, rather than merely a tool for reciting texts.

Step 1:

Teachers give an 'open-ended task' (like design a class English party), and divide students into groups of five. Each group discusses how to divide tasks and design the activity. Teachers act only as guides, not as leaders. This means teachers will only offer help when students meet a problem.

Step 2:

After 15 minutes of discussion, each group needs to present their design to the class.

For example, the teacher gives a task to let students design a class English party. Then students can separate their work and design how it works by discussing in English. Only when students encounter problems like 'What else do we need for the party?' will they offer help.

During this open-ended task, students can practice using English in solving problems. However, it is important to note that teachers do not need to overemphasize students' grammatical errors. Our main goal for teaching is to let students practice use English. In that case, when students make grammar mistakes, teachers can remind them by rephrasing their sentences in the interrogative form. This

not only reinforces students' awareness of the error, but also avoids disrupting students' coherent thinking process. Post-stage: real-life situation + independent practice, continues the English thinking habit

The core of this stage is to extend English thinking beyond the classroom and integrate it into daily life. This helps students perceive the practical value of English, thereby motivating them to proactively continue their thinking training.

Students need to choose 1 real situation in daily life and complete the corresponding English task. For example, if the student likes idols, then they can use English to write a letter to the foreign singer. Students will actively think about questions like 'Will the singer understand my message?' 'express myself more clearly?' So, this can help students to apply English thinking to daily life. For another example, if the student is a food-lover. Then he/she can choose to write a review of a dish. The taste of the food, what it looks like, etc.

Another effective approach is to extend the tasks or discussions that students have already engaged with in class. For instance, if the in-class topic was "planning a class volunteer day," students can form small WeChat groups to keep talking about details in English—such as how to contact a local community or what supplies to prepare. This not only helps them experience a sense of accomplishment when they collaboratively develop solutions, but also allows them to keep discussing in English even when they encounter small language problems (like not knowing the word for "supplies").

## 4. Conclusion

This study focuses on optimizing oral interaction patterns in Chinese high school English classrooms under the guidance of TESL methodology, aiming to address the shortcomings of traditional oral English teaching. The research first identifies core issues in current teaching: dominated by exam-oriented goals, classes are teacher-centered, with over 90% of time spent on grammar or vocabulary drills, resulting in the prevalence of the 'dumb English' phenomenon. The lack of effective opportunities for oral expression has led to prominent problems such as incorrect pronunciation, speech hesitations, and communication anxiety. The root cause of this phenomenon is that the teaching principle focuses on input over output,

limitations in teachers' professional competencies and instructional approaches, students' psychological and environmental barriers, and the low weight of oral test scores in the Gaokao—all of which contribute to systematic inconsistencies.

Based on TESL's principles of contextualized input, interactive practice, and responsiveness to learners' needs, the study proposes three-stage strategies: Pre-stage lets students choose topics and use personalized corpora to awaken English thinking; While-stage uses open tasks to drive group discussions (teachers only guide) for solving problems in English; Post-stage extends class activities to real life or WeChat discussions to sustain English thinking. These strategies address gaps in traditional teaching and significantly enhance students' oral proficiency and language confidence.

A limitation of this study is that its sample scope is limited to Chinese high school students, which may restrict the generalizability of the research conclusions. For future research directions, the scope of research participants can be further expanded. This includes involving students from different regions and academic stages, or even from different countries, so can obtain more comprehensive research findings. Furthermore, more empirical research methods can be adopted, such as implementing comparative experiments with two student groups and conducting long-term follow-up observations. This will help determine the effectiveness of these optimized oral English teaching methods and the extent of their effectiveness, ultimately providing more targeted insights for the reform of high school English teaching.

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