

# Investigation of Teachers and Students' Attitude Towards Adding Oral English Test to the High School Entrance Examination in Hubei Province

Hongyu Xia<sup>1\*</sup>, Qing Yuan<sup>1</sup>, Xiaoge Han<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English Department, School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Jingzhou, China

## Email Address

[hongyu0306@foxmail.com](mailto:hongyu0306@foxmail.com) (Hongyu Xia)

\*Correspondence: [hongyu0306@foxmail.com](mailto:hongyu0306@foxmail.com)

**Received:** 12 September 2021; **Accepted:** 6 October 2021; **Published:** 11 October 2021

---

## Abstract:

This research is based on the interviews and classroom observations of some teachers and students in a middle school in Jingzhou City, Hubei Province, China, which is designed to investigate the effects of adding oral English test to the High School Entrance Examination on English teaching and learning in Hubei Province. The study shows that the oral test has a positive effect on both teaching and learning of junior middle school English. In general, teachers' and students' basic views and attitudes toward oral examinations are positive. Students consider that it can increase their awareness of the importance of oral English and intentionally practice speaking in and out of class to prepare for the coming test. Teachers believe that the oral test can test students' comprehensive language skills and motivate teachers to optimize teaching reform, as well as improve and strengthen students' oral practice activities in and out of class.

## Keywords:

English Teaching and Learning, Oral English Test, Effect, Junior Middle School English

---

## 1. Introduction

In 2004, Jiangsu Province was reported to be the first province in China to include oral test scores in the total score of the high school entrance examinations. In addition, since 2009, all municipalities in Jiangsu Province have adopted the "human-computer dialogue" oral test in the secondary school examinations. Since then, an increasing number of provinces and cities across China have added the oral test. In the case of Hubei Province, Yichang, Huangshi, Jingmen and other cities have launched the oral test reform program in their secondary school English examinations, and the rest are also conducting feasibility study and pilot tests on oral English tests. The trend to add oral English test will have a great impact on the teaching of English in junior middle schools. However, at present, few studies have been conducted on the teaching reform of English listening and speaking classes in junior schools in Hubei Province. Against

such a research background, there still remains some space worth exploring in this field. This study is mainly based on the survey and analysis of teachers and students in a middle school to explore the effects of adding oral English test to the High School Entrance Examination on English teaching and learning in Hubei Province. By investigating the teachers and students in a middle school, the study provides some reference for the front-line middle school English teachers and students and researchers of basic English teaching. The English Curriculum Standards for General High School (2017) states that “English language proficiency constitutes a foundational element of the core literacy of the English language subject.” In addition, it emphasizes that the goal of language proficiency is “to have a certain degree of language awareness and English language sense, to use existing language knowledge in an integrated manner in common concrete contexts, to understand the meanings expressed in oral and written discourse, to identify the means used to express their meanings appropriately, and to use oral and written language effectively to express meanings and communicate interpersonally.” [1]. “The Senior High School Entrance examination examines whether junior school graduates have reached the level of graduation from the junior school level as specified in the Curriculum for English language learning.” [2]. Thus, it is necessary to add oral English tests to the High School Entrance Examination, which not only reflects the requirements of the curriculum, but also is an inevitable trend for the future development of the High School Entrance Examination. This is consistent with what Guangming Zhang in “The Necessity and Feasibility of Adding Oral English Test” to the High School Entrance Examination says. [3]

## 2. Survey Design

### 2.1. Background and Purpose of the Study

*The English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High School* (2017) clearly states that the language proficiency objectives include the effective use of spoken language for interpersonal communication. This shows that the curriculum standards attach great importance to students’ ability to use English comprehensively and makes clear the importance of speaking. Teachers should follow the laws of language learning as well as the laws of students’ psychological development and cognition, and implement revision teaching in conjunction with the examination objectives of the high school entrance examination [4]. recent years, China’s basic education reform has achieved a lot. Furthermore, the quality of English teachers has been improved to a great extent. To a certain extent, the level of native English teachers is able to meet the needs of oral teaching and thus ensure the implementation of oral tests. Moreover, oral tests have been added to the English language examinations for secondary schools in many places, in addition, Beijing will add oral tests to the English language examinations for the college entrance examinations from 2021. Yichang, Huangshi, Jingmen and other cities in Hubei Province have launched their English listening and speaking test reform programs. This shows that it has become a trend to add oral English test to the high school entrance examination, which will have a great impact on English teaching and learning in junior schools.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the following two aspects: First, to understand the attitudinal reaction of students to the addition of oral test and the importance they attach to listening and speaking classes, so that students can understand the audiovisual class reform in advance and prepare for the oral test. Second, to investigate teachers' attitudes toward the addition of oral test and the

current status of oral teaching, so that teachers can adjust teaching contents, teaching methods, and teaching evaluation methods as appropriate.

## **2.2. Object, Content and Method of the Study**

The subjects of this survey are parts of teachers and students of Dongfanghong Middle School in Jingzhou City, Hubei Province, and the survey methods were interviews and classroom observations. The content of the students' interviews focused on the students' basic views and attitudes toward the oral test, the students' practice of speaking inside and outside the classroom, and the students' suggestions about the oral test; the teachers' interviews focused on the teachers' basic views and attitudes toward the oral test, the teachers' organization of speaking training outside the classroom, and the teachers' ideas about the future speaking teaching. The survey period was from May 10, 2021 to May 15, 2021. A total of 18 teachers and 200 students were interviewed in this survey.

The data of the interviews and classroom observations were analyzed separately.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Analysis of Students' Interview Results**

With regard to students' basic views and attitudes towards the oral English test, the research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows: "Do you know that the oral test will be added to the high school entrance examination in the future?" "Do you think that the addition of the oral test will help improve your 'dumb English'?" "Do you think this reform will have a positive or negative impact on your learning?" "How do you feel about its arrival?" The result comes out that 169 students thought it was necessary to add oral English test, 172 students thought the oral test would greatly improve their "dumb English", 135 students thought the oral test would have a positive impact on their studies. There are also 66 students feeling it a mixed blessing. 15 students were nervous while 15 were excited to its arrival. Only 56 students were indifferent or resistant. Nevertheless, 130 students were unaware of this reform trend. This indicates that students, in general, do not attach importance to oral learning at this stage. Most of the students have positive attitude towards the oral test but there is a lag in information from their schools as well as the schools do not play emphasis on oral English.

About students' practice of speaking inside and outside the classroom, questions are as follows: "Do you usually communicate in English?" "How do you practice speaking outside the classroom?" "Do you think your pronunciation is standard?". According to the interview results, 120 students never or sometimes communicate with their classmates and teachers in English, which reflects that the students have less investment in speaking learning. Learners' oral proficiency somewhat lags behind the development of other three skills. [5] Some students are still very interested in speaking and most of them realize that their speaking is average or not standard. In general, students do not pay enough attention to speaking English and do not practice it deliberately. From other side, it indicates that students need to increase their practice time in the speaking section.

Regarding the students' suggestions for the oral English test, 179 students preferred combination of both 'human-computer dialogue' and manual testing for the test, which manifests that information technology has influenced the way of oral English tests a lot. For our junior middle school students, their spoken English is relatively

weak, and with the continuous reform of the new information technology curriculum, new requirements have been put forward for the existing oral English tests in junior middle school. [6] (Table 1).

**Table 1. Students' Interview Results.**

Basic views and attitudes of students	necessary to add	169/200
	improve 'dumb English'	172/200
	positive impact	66/200
	a mixed missing	135/200
	nervous for its arrival	15/200
	excited for its arrival	15/200
	indifferent for its arrival	56/200
	unaware of this reform trend	130/200
Practice of speaking inside and outside the classroom	never or sometimes communicate in English	120/200
	learn through movies or music after class	145/200
Suggestions	combination of both 'human-computer dialogue' and manual testing	179/200

### 3.2. Analysis of Teachers' Interview Results

Concerning the teachers' basic views and attitudes toward the oral test, most of them think that it is necessary to add the oral test and it will exert certain impact on their teaching. This indicates that most teachers are aware of the necessity of adding oral tests. However, the results demonstrate that they still consider it a secondary skill.

Regarding the teachers' organization of oral training outside of class, the number of teachers who organize oral practice more often and frequently in the daily teaching process is only 10, which is only slightly more than the teachers who organize speaking practice rarely. Obviously, this indicates that teachers have not yet made teaching reform for the arriving test.

With aspects to teachers' suggestions, from their perspective, the biggest difficulty when implementing the speaking teaching is the lack of parents' support, for they are afraid of their children indulging in Internet because oral practice involves using cell phone app. When asked how they response to the reform, 15 teachers chose to use the most traditional in-class teaching to create a context for students to learn oral English while 5 teachers suggested that they would like to add a specific lesson to organize speaking practice. This reflects that some teachers still adopt the most traditional teaching methods and do not fully integrate oral teaching into the classroom and life. On the other hand, teachers will make changes in the future to prepare for the oral English test. In this case, Activity Teaching Method is regarded as an effective classroom method which is suitable for oral English teaching in junior middle school. [7] (Table 2)

**Table 2. Teachers' Interview Results.**

Basic views and attitudes of teachers	necessary to add	16/18
	consider it a secondary skill	17/18
Organization of oral training outside of class	frequently	10/18
	rarely	8/18
Suggestions	add oral tests	5/18
	traditional in-class teaching to create a context	15/18

### 3.3. Analysis of Classroom Observation Results

Based on the classroom observation of 7 teachers at this school, it found that only 2 teachers organized speaking activities in the classroom regularly and 5 teachers organized occasionally. Besides, they mainly organized through teacher-student interaction and text dialogue without setting up a special context for teaching. In terms of the language used in the classroom, most teachers use English as the main language and Chinese as a supplement, and a small number of teachers choose half Chinese to English or Chinese as the main language.

From the frequency of students' participation in speaking activities in the classroom, many students are not active in speaking activities with an indifferent attitude. Also, students' pronunciation is generally not standard, and only 3 teachers would specifically correct students' pronunciation. Phonetic teaching is the first level of basic English [8]. Pronunciation is an important element of speaking, including phonetics, intonation, stress, light reading, and consecutive reading, etc., while most teachers only focus on the phonetics problem and do not give students guidance on several other elements. In order to change the current situation of students' "dumb English", teachers should not only improve their methods but also change their concepts, not only for the sake of test taking but also for the sake of students' Core Competencies improvement.

## 4. Conclusion and Implications

To sum up, most junior school students do not attach enough importance to spoken English, but most of them can accept the initiative of adding oral English test to the High School Entrance Examination. Most teachers are still not fully prepared for this reform. Teachers are supposed to make appropriate teaching plans according to students' specific situations, pay attention to pronunciation and context training, and use English more often while teaching.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

## References

- [1] Ministry of Education. English curriculum standards for general high school. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2017.
- [2] Wen, A.Y. Survey and analysis of the current situation of preparation for English midterm review. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools (Middle School)*, 2011, 1, 1-8.
- [3] Zhang, G.M.; Yi, A.P. The Necessity and Feasibility of Adding Oral English Test to the High School Entrance. *English Teachers*, 2018, 18(04), 100-102.
- [4] Nie, Y.W. Effective Factors Influencing Oral English Teaching. Paper presented at DEStech Transactions on Social Science, Education and Human Science. 2018. DOI: 10.12783/dtssehs/sshe2018/26441.
- [5] Lu, S. Changes of the New Information Technology Curriculum Reform on the Oral English Test in the High School Entrance Examination. *Kaoshi Zhoukan*, 2020, 57, 100-101.

- [6] Xiao, K.; Zhen, P.F. The Application of Activity Teaching Method to Oral English Teaching in Primary Schools. *World Scientific Research Journal*, 2021, 7(9), 204-210.
- [7] Zhou, H. Strategies and methods of teaching spoken English in junior high school. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools (Middle School)*, 2009, 11, 25-29.



© 2021 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)