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Phonological Liaison Challenges for Chinese EFL Learners and Effective Teaching

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the phonological liaison challenges Chinese high-school EFL learners face. It analyzes the linguistic features of liaison and identifies difficulties such as insufficient targeted exercises, false imitation, and interference from the mother tongue. The teaching context in Chinese high-school classrooms is considered, where large class sizes and test-orientation pose obstacles. To address these, practical teaching strategies like step-by-step teaching, repetitive practice, and using communicative methods are proposed. Although there are challenges in resource shortage and teacher capacity, the proposed changes are feasible. This research aims to enhance students' English oral fluency and accuracy in liaison.

Keywords: Chinese EFL learners; liaison; teaching challenges; teaching strategies

1. Introduction

The phonological system plays a crucial role in language acquisition. Pronunciation is of great significance as it bridges communication gaps [1]. This study focuses on liaison, a specific feature of the phonological system related to speaking. Liaison, a phenomenon that refers to the seamless connection of sounds between adjacent words, presents a major challenge for Chinese high school English learners. These students often struggle to master this aspect due to various factors, such as differences in their native language phonological patterns and limited exposure to natural spoken English.

The teaching context is English classrooms in Chinese high schools. These classrooms are characterized by large class sizes, with an average of 50 students per class, limited time for individual practice, usually only about 5-10 minutes per class for speaking practice, and a curriculum that needs to balance various language skills and knowledge [2]. In addition, students have relatively limited exposure to real English environments outside of the classroom, relying mainly on textbooks and classroom instruction. Textbooks provide a structured approach to learning, but they may not always offer the same level of authenticity as real-life language use. Classroom instruction is crucial, but it may not fully replicate the natural language environment that students would encounter in an English-speaking country or in real-life communication situations.

The primary aim of this research is to delve into the unique difficulties that Chinese high-school students encounter when attempting to master English communication skills. For students, possessing the capability to communicate fluently and precisely in English holds significant importance. In international academic exchanges, such as attending international seminars or participating in overseas study programs, accurate use of liaison can help students better convey their ideas, avoid misunderstandings, and enhance their

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academic competitiveness. However, due to a lack of proper understanding and insufficient practice of liaison, their speech often comes across as unnatural and less fluid. By concentrating on this specific area, there is a strong hope that students' speaking proficiency can be substantially enhanced, which is highly relevant not only to their immediate language learning in the classroom but also to their future development in the globalized world.

The structure of the paper is arranged as follows. In the following chapters, I will analyze the linguistic characteristics of contact in detail, explore how it works, and why it poses challenges for Chinese high school students, with examples. Then, the applications for language teaching will be presented. This includes establishing key teaching principles such as integrating liaison practice into daily language use, adopting a step-by-step approach, and emphasizing repetitive practice. Drilling approaches within the communicative methodology will also be discussed, along with practical examples and techniques like using textbook dialogues and creating chant-like exercises. In addition, existing teaching materials will be evaluated to identify their strengths and advantages, weaknesses in the pedagogical linkages and recommendations for improvement. Finally, in conclusion, a summary of the key insights, implications for practice, a critical engagement with the topic considering potential issues, and a demonstration of the feasibility of the proposed changes will be provided.

2. Analysis of Linguistic Features and Learners' Challenges

2.1. Analysis of Linguistic Features

Liaison is a prominent feature of the English spoken phonetic system. Generally speaking, liaison can be divided into three types: vowel-consonant liaison, consonant-vowel liaison, and vowel-vowel liaison [3].

Vowel-consonant liaison involves the linking of the final vowel in one word to the initial consonant of the subsequent word. Take the phrase "go to" as an example. In natural, flowing speech, the /əʊ/ vowel in "go" can be smoothly connected to the /t/ in "to". Conversely, consonant-vowel liaison is about the connection between the last consonant of a word and the first vowel of the next word. When it comes to vowel-vowel liaison, in cases where the vowels of two adjacent words meet, a semivowel like /j/ or /w/ might be inserted. For example, "see us" is commonly pronounced as /si:jas/, and "go out" is usually pronounced as /gəʊwaʊt/.

In connected speech, liaison occurs in such a smooth and natural way that it gives spoken English an authentic accent. Liaison refers to the smooth linking of sounds between words in connected speech, often involving the introduction or continuation of sounds to facilitate fluency. In generative phonology, this is a process produced by linking rules. This rule comes into effect within particular phonetic circumstances. It is most frequently observed when a word concluding with a consonant is immediately followed by a word commencing with a vowel.

Regarding implications for language teaching, teacher trainers should develop a comprehensive understanding of the language they teach. This means that they need to understand the structural components of the language, cultural details, and common usage scenarios. For example, teachers with a comprehensive understanding of linked speech can design more effective teaching methods by incorporating real-life scenarios where linked speech is common, such as movie dialogues or daily conversations, to help students understand not only how to link speech, but also why and when these linked speeches occur in different communication situations. In this way, students can better master the skills of linked speech and improve their overall English-speaking level [4,5].

2.2. Difficulties Encountered by Chinese High-School Learners

2.2.1. Insufficient targeted exercises

English teaching methods need to fit the social context. Chinese high school English learners are often confused about oral linking. As Altinay point out, English education in China focuses on written tests and emphasizes isolated vocabulary and grammar knowledge, which leaves students with no real-world speaking practice opportunities and continuous reading is often overlooked [6]. At a high school in Chongqing, where I studied, the limited class time forced teachers to rush through the teaching of new vocabulary and grammar, and we had little time to practice speaking skills such as continuous reading. In English role-play activities, we are so engrossed in memorizing lines and using the correct tenses that they forget to apply the concatenation rules. Even in oral memorization tasks that seem appropriate for practicing pronunciation, the focus is often misplaced.

When I read a sentence such as "I Have a Dream", I may focus more on pronouncing words correctly and mimicking emotional tones rather than pronouncing "I have" as /aɪv/ or "go back" as /gəʊbæk/. In the classroom, teachers are mainly busy preparing students for the college entrance examination by explaining vocabulary and grammar and carrying out written exercises. For example, in a textual analysis class, the focus is on grammar and vocabulary, and the continuous reading is given little attention [7].

2.2.2. False imitation issues

In the process of learning English, we often face challenges due to false imitations. When I was in high school, there were several video stores near the school that sold all kinds of English learning materials [8]. English songs and movie DVDs are very popular among us. However, we often overlook the underlying problem. When we hum along to a pop song, we rarely analyze the natural pattern of continuous reading. In some fast-paced pop songs, in order to match the melody and rhythm, the continuous reading may be exaggerated or ambiguous, which may mislead us. Due to the lack of proper instruction, we may adopt these wrong contiguous patterns, which in turn makes it more difficult for us to master natural spoken English.

2.2.3. Reasons underlying the challenges

1) Overemphasis on written English in English language education

Our English courses are primarily test-oriented. Similar question types are tested many times before the college entrance examination, with an emphasis on reading, writing, and grammar. A lot of the time, my class time is focused on getting me to prepare for these written exams. Continuous reading is essential for spoken English, but in this test-driven environment, it is considered less important, so I receive insufficient continuous reading instruction [9].

In a typical high school English class in my city, teachers may spend weeks training us to write argumentative essays, focusing on proper sentence structure, proper vocabulary use, and logical argumentation. In grammar teaching, great emphasis is placed on identifying and correcting grammatical errors in written texts, rather than understanding how grammar is used in natural speech and connected speech contexts. When teaching the present perfect tense, the teacher will use a lot of written exercises to familiarize students with the correct form, but rarely show how it can be expressed in spoken language through conjunctions, such as "I've been" as /aɪv biːn/ [10].

2) Interference from mother tongue phonetic system

The Chinese phonetic system is based on syllables, and each Chinese character has a unique pronunciation [7]. This presents a challenge for us, as the clear division of syllables in Chinese is very different from the smooth integration of sounds in English conjunction. Our Chinese pronunciation habits carry over to English pronunciation, making it difficult for them to understand the concept of phonemic fusion across word boundaries.

For example, when you say "I look at him" in Chinese, each word "I", "look", "at" and "him" is pronounced clearly and independently. This makes them more accustomed to pronouncing the simple English phrase "look at" as two separate words, rather than fluently pronouncing it as /ləkət/. Even if Chinese students understand the concept of connected speech, they may still struggle to apply it. In the case of "put it on", Chinese students often struggle to break free from Chinese-influenced pronunciation patterns, and may pronounce each word in isolation, with a slight pause in between, rather than pronouncing it /pʊt ɪt ɒn/. Another example is the phrase "not at all", which does not have a similar concept of continuous reading in Chinese, so it may be difficult for students to connect the "t" in "not" with the "a" in "at", and then connect the "t" in "at" with the "a" in "all" and pronounce it as /nɒtætɔ:l/.

3) Limited exposure to real-life English communication

Outside of the classroom, we rarely have the opportunity to have an authentic conversation in English [10-12]. Due to the lack of exposure to authentic examples of connected speech in real-life scenarios, we often fail to develop an intuitive understanding of when and how to use liaison. In my high school, there are no international students or native English teachers. The only English-language media that students are exposed to is often limited to heavily edited movies on television, many of which have slower dialogue and are not as obvious as reading in natural dialogue. When I try to imitate what I hear, I miss the correct contiguity. For example, an application might emphasize the "and" pronunciation of /ænd/ alone, but not the concatenation of the "and" in "he and i" /hi ən ai/. While watching English television programs, we frequently focus more on the subtitles and overlook the phenomena of connected speech. For example, when watching *Friends*, expressions like "going na" and "wanna" are often not properly noticed in terms of their natural pronunciation patterns.

2.3. Examples

2.3.1. Examples of correct liaison usage

In natural, fluent English speech, word-final consonant + word-initial vowel liaison is a common phenomenon. For instance, Chinese high school students who have mastered this can apply it in role-play situations. Imagine they are enacting a scene in a clothing store, a student might say, "Can I try it on?" with the correct liaison, making their speech sound more native-like and fluent. Moreover, when speaking quickly and naturally, liaisons also occur across phrases. Take the sentence "I used to go there." as an example. A proficient English speaker would pronounce it as /aɪ juːstə ɡəʊ ðeə/. In an English-speaking competition among high school students, those who have practiced liaison can use this feature accurately. They are able to link words in a seamless flow.

2.3.2. Examples of Incorrect Liaison Usage

1) Over-application

Some learners misunderstand the rules of liaison and overuse it. For instance, in the sentence "I have a book", the correct pronunciation is /aɪ hæv ə bʊk/. However, some learners, trying too hard to apply liaison, might incorrectly say /aɪ hævjaː bʊk/, wrongly linking "have" and "a" in an unnatural way. This often happens because they have learned about the concept of liaison but lack a precise understanding of when it is appropriate. This not only sounds unnatural but also deviates from the standard pronunciation rules. In the phrase "for an hour", which should be pronounced /fɔːr ən 'aʊə/, some learners may wrongly insert a glide and pronounce it as /fɔːrjən 'aʊə/, creating a jarring and incorrect pronunciation.

2) Failure to link

On the other hand, many learners simply fail to apply liaison at all. When reading aloud a text like "get up early", we would pronounce each word separately as /get ʌp 'ɜːli/, instead of the more natural, linked version /getəp 'ɜːli/. In an oral presentation in class,

this lack of liaison makes their speech choppy and less fluent, and it also fails to convey the natural rhythm of English. It might be due to the fact that in Chinese, there is no equivalent phonological feature, so students are not accustomed to connecting sounds between words.

During a group discussion in English, if a student says "I want to go to school" as /aɪ wɒnt tuː ɡəʊ tuː skuːl/ instead of the linked /aɪ wɒntə ɡəʊ tə skuːl/, it can disrupt the flow of conversation and make the communication less efficient. Such non-liaison pronunciations can give the impression that the speaker is less proficient in spoken English, even if they have a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary.

3. Applications for Language Teaching

3.1. Key Teaching Principles for Oral English Liaison

Celce-Murcia put forward that irrespective of the particular approach, liaison refers to the joining of sounds or words, where the words are not pronounced in a way that would suggest they are isolated entities [4]. Remarkably, English pronunciation continues to be overlooked in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms globally, even in Asian educational settings at present. Nevertheless, within the realm of Chinese high-school English instruction, there exists a chance to reverse this scenario. We are more likely to engage when we see the practical applications of liaison.

3.1.1. Step-by-Step teaching principle for liaison

Given the complexity of liaison rules, a step-by-step principle is essential. As Huang's Input Hypothesis suggests, learners need to be exposed to language at an appropriate level of difficulty [13]. Teachers should begin with the simplest forms of liaison, such as word-final consonant + word-initial vowel links, like in "look at" (/lʊk æt/ becoming /lʊ kæt/). Once students have grasped these basic liaisons, more complex cases, like triple consonant liaisons in phrases like "first try" (/fɜːst traɪ/ with a smooth link between "st" and "tr") can be introduced. This incremental progression ensures that students do not become overwhelmed by the complexities of phonological features all at once. After introducing the final consonant+initial vowel ligature, the teacher gives the students a set of phrases, such as "look after" (/lʊk 'ɑːftə/) and "give it back" (/ɡɪv ɪt bæk/). The teacher demonstrates the correct pronunciation several times, and the students practice in pairs. Once the student shows a good command of these basic ligatures, the teacher moves on to more complex situations. When introducing triple consonant ligatures, such as "next time" (/nekst taɪm/), the teacher can use a tongue twister: "Next time you send a text message, be extra careful." This not only makes the learning process more interesting, but also helps students practice difficult consonant connections.

3.1.2. Importance and methods of repetitive principle for liaison

Repetition has long been acknowledged as a powerful tool in language acquisition, as suggested by Skinner's behaviorist theory [14]. To strengthen students' mastery of liaison, repetitive practice can be highly effective. Teachers can design short, focused drills where students repeat phrases with correct liaison multiple times. For example, a drill could involve repeating the phrase "pick it up" (/pɪk ɪ tʌp/) ten times in quick succession. Over time, through repeated exposure and production, the neural pathways related to the correct pronunciation of liaisons are reinforced, enabling students to produce these linked sounds automatically and accurately in spontaneous speech. Additionally, teachers can gamify repetition exercises. For example, create a "ligature relay" game. Divide the class into small groups. The first student in each group begins by repeating a ligature-rich phrase, such as "give it back to me" (/ɡɪv ɪt bæk/), a certain number of times. They then quickly pass an object (like a pencil) to the next student, who must repeat a different phrase [15].

3.2. Drilling Approaches within the Communicative Methodology

When teachers are aware of the significance of drills and possess the skills to conduct them effectively, learners are likely to engage more positively. Since its inception, the communicative methodology (CM) has been designed to be socially beneficial. Gómez et al. noted that CM has shown the ability to make social impacts across diverse knowledge domains [11]. It contributes to improving not only the individuals and groups under study but also society at large. As Bruner posited, it enables us to engage in learning, propelling our thoughts, knowledge acquisition, and personal development to greater depths and extents [1].

In the context of communicative language teaching, pair work drills have been shown to be highly effective for practicing liaison [16]. Pairs of students are given short dialogues or scenarios that are rich in liaison opportunities. For example, a dialogue about ordering food in a restaurant: "I'd like a hamburger and an apple pie." Here, the liaison between "a" and "hamburger" as well as "an" and "apple" can be practiced. One student plays the role of the customer, and the other is the waiter. They repeat the dialogue several times, swapping roles after each round. This encourages students to focus on both the meaning and the accurate pronunciation of the liaisons within a realistic context. It also gives them immediate feedback from their peers. This feedback is more relaxed and less intimidating compared to teacher-led correction, which promotes more active participation [17,18].

3.3. Practical Examples & Techniques

3.3.1. Utilizing textbook dialogues for liaison practice

Most English textbooks contain dialogues useful for practicing liaisons [18]. For example, in a school club recruitment-themed unit, a dialogue like "A: Hey, are you interested in joining our debate club? B: Yeah, I am! But I'm not sure if I have enough time..." presents liaisons such as "are you" (/ɑːr juː/), "I am" (/aɪm/), and "But I'm" (/bʌtaɪm/). Similarly, in a weekend trip-planning dialogue like "A: What are we gonna do this weekend? B: Let's go hiking...", there are liaisons like "What are" (/wɒtɑːr/), "gonna" (/ˈɡənə/), and "Let's go" (/letsɡəʊ/). Teachers can draw students' attention to these, have them read the dialogues aloud in pairs, gradually increasing speed, and turn it into a competition. This reinforces correct liaison use and familiarizes students with natural English speech rhythm in high-school-relevant contexts.

3.3.2. Role-play activities for liaison mastery

Role-play is a staple in language classrooms, and it can be easily adapted to focus on liaison [19]. Consider a role-play scenario set in a hotel. One student is the receptionist, and the other is the guest. The script could include phrases like "Check in, please. Here's my ID card." Teachers can rewrite the script, emphasizing liaison points. For example, "Here's" and "my" should be pronounced as /hɪəz maɪ/. Before starting the role-play, students practice the revised sentences several times. During the role-play, the teacher can monitor and offer immediate feedback. To make it more challenging, students can improvise within the role-play while still keeping the liaison rules in mind. This way, they are forced to use liaison spontaneously, as they would in real-life communication [20].

3.4. Course Book Evaluation

When evaluating an English course book's treatment of liaison, a comprehensive assessment of its written and audio components is essential. In written content, many books lack clear explanations, often merely mentioning liaison briefly in a pronunciation appendix without detailed rules or examples. Also, practice sections are insufficient, usually limited to a few end-of-unit fill-in-the-blank questions; more diverse types like specific gap-fills and matching exercises are needed. Regarding audio content, there is a lack of

accent diversity, with resources typically featuring only standard British or American accents [21]. Including a range of accents from various English-speaking countries would allow students to better understand the nuances of liaison in different contexts. Overall, publishers must improve by providing in-depth explanations, diverse practice materials, and enhanced audio resources to assist Chinese EFL learners in mastering this key aspect of oral English [13].

4. Practical Approaches, Challenges, and Feasibility in English Liaison Teaching

4.1. Adoption of Key Teaching Principles

According to Mo, explicit learning refers to learners' conscious and purposeful efforts to master specific knowledge or solve problems [22]. The results of the analysis of English oral linking have far-reaching significance for the teaching of Chinese high school students. Teachers should integrate linking exercises into regular classroom activities. For example, they can begin with a short conversation about the weather, such as "It's a nice day, isn't it?", while emphasizing the linking between "It's" and "a". This makes linking a fixed part of daily communication, helps students gradually internalize it in a natural context, and encourages them to use it in real English communication scenarios, such as chatting with international pen pals [23,24].

The course design should also follow the principle of gradual progress, starting with simple two-word consonant-vowel linked phrases, and then introducing long sentences and complex linking between multiple words as students gain confidence [25]. At the same time, it is crucial to incorporate repeated drills into daily teaching. Teachers can arrange a "linking warm-up" session before each class, asking students to repeat common phrases with correct liaison several times, either by following the teacher's demonstration sentences or practicing in pairs. Through continuous repetition, students can form muscle memory of correct linked pronunciation and speak accurately more naturally.

4.2. Implementation of Practical Skills

Given that many textbooks are insufficient in terms of linked pronunciation, Teachers can supplement existing materials by creating additional exercises based on the textbook evaluation method proposed by Demir and Eltas [9]. Create a fill-in-the-blank exercise worksheet focusing on linked pronunciation for each unit, such as setting a sentence like "I'm going to (take) a trip" in the travel unit, guiding students to fill in the correct linked form /teɪkə/, and encourage students to listen to alternative audio such as podcasts with more natural accents and speed to improve their imitation skills [26].

Role-playing and group activities should be a regular part of the class [6]. Teachers can arrange role-play themes related to students' interests, such as movie theater scenes, and ask students to write and perform dialogues, focusing on linked pronunciation accuracy. In addition, teachers can also use multimedia resources to promote learning, such as playing English film and television clips and pausing to analyze the connected reading. They can also recommend online pronunciation applications with specific connected reading exercises, offering students extra practice opportunities outside of class to meet varying learning progress and styles.

4.3. Challenges Encountered in Implementing English Liaison Instruction

4.3.1. Teaching resources and challenges faced by teachers

There are many difficulties in teaching resources when implementing the teaching of oral linking in English. Demir and Eltas pointed out that the growing demand for English communication skills has led to a surge in demand for English teaching resources around the world [9]. However, in some underfunded schools, especially in rural areas of China, the use of film clips or English podcasts to demonstrate linking faces the problems of limited network bandwidth, lack of equipment such as projectors or smart TVs, and difficulty in obtaining non-copyrighted materials, which limits the development of multimedia

courses. At the same time, the production of supplementary materials for teaching materials, such as additional practice worksheets, takes time and tests the professional ability of teachers.

Teachers themselves also face challenges. Many English teachers have not received in-depth training in phonetics, especially liaison. Although they are familiar with basic pronunciation rules, they find it difficult to analyze complex linking patterns. In addition, the shift from traditional teaching methods to linked reading teaching methods that focus on communication and interaction is quite difficult for teachers who are accustomed to lecture-based teaching in organizing and controlling classroom activities, making it difficult to ensure that students focus on tasks and achieve learning goals.

4.3.2. Obstacles brought by learners

Learners' expectations pose a challenge to linked reading teaching. Chinese high school students, accustomed to traditional, test-oriented assessment methods, often prioritize grammar and vocabulary tests. This focus on testing leads them to see linked reading practice as irrelevant, as they believe it does not directly contribute to improving their test scores. Consequently, they resist activities like role-playing or song practice, which they feel do not yield immediate academic benefits. Moreover, students often expect rapid improvements in their English skills, but mastering linked reading, as a complex phonetic feature, requires sustained and long-term practice, which is difficult for students accustomed to more immediate, test-based results.

The teaching environment is also challenging, particularly in large classes, which are common in Chinese high schools. With 40 to 50 students, or even more, it becomes difficult for teachers to engage in interactive activities like pair exercises or group storytelling. This large class size limits the teacher's ability to monitor individual progress and provide personalized feedback. Additionally, during connected reading exercises, role-playing, or song practice, students often struggle to hear each other clearly, which diminishes the overall effectiveness of the learning experience.

4.4. Feasibility of Proposed Changes

Currently, the extent of teachers' awareness of connected speech teaching issues and methods is relatively limited. However, based on some preliminary investigations and teaching practice feedback, some teachers have already realized the importance of connected speech teaching. However, a considerable proportion of teachers still lack sufficient understanding and systematic training in specific and effective teaching methods, which has affected the teaching effectiveness to some extent. Even with limited resources, it is still possible to implement changes in the teaching of connected speech in spoken English through creative and resource-efficient methods, such as utilizing free online resources or focusing on in-class exercises.

To improve teacher capacity, a progressive professional development strategy can be adopted. This could include a series of workshops focused on connected speech, peer observations, and ongoing feedback, allowing teachers to gradually incorporate these techniques into their teaching practices. By gradually carrying out connected speech teaching, teachers can grow together with students, and can also share teaching experiences and enhance teaching confidence by collaborating with colleagues [27]. In addition, teachers can leverage their existing classroom management and basic English teaching skills to enhance connected speech teaching. For example, skills in leading discussions can be used to facilitate peer feedback sessions, while the ability to explain grammar rules can be adapted to teach the principles of connected speech. For example, the ability to lead a whole-class discussion can be used in the peer learning feedback link, and the ability to explain grammar rules can also be transferred to explain the principles of connected speech [20].

In view of the anxiety of high school students in English classes and their intermediate English learning strategies, teachers can help them overcome learning difficulties by designing special linked reading practice courses, such as using the linked reading form of "wonder how" in "The Lemon Tree", and guiding students to manage their anxiety [28].

In terms of teaching methods, role-playing, group storytelling and ballad practice can break the traditional rote learning model, stimulate students' learning interest, and make them more actively participate in linked reading learning. At the same time, closely combining linked reading with daily language use, whether it is peer dialogue or real scenes in role-playing, can make students see the practicality of what they have learned, enhance their learning motivation and confidence, and thus better master this challenging phonetic feature. In conclusion, the proposed changes to teaching liaison are both appropriate and workable, as they take into account the constraints of resources, the capabilities of teachers, and the needs of students in the Chinese high school context [29,30].

5. Conclusion

This paper explores the difficulties faced by Chinese high school English learners in mastering liaison, such as lack of targeted exercises, interference from native language phonological habits, and misunderstanding of linking rules. To this end, a series of practical teaching strategies are proposed, including gradually carrying out teaching from easy to difficult, cleverly integrating linked speech practice into daily English application, and strengthening students' memory through repeated practice.

However, in the implementation process, there are many challenges, such as the lack of teaching resources, insufficient professional ability of teachers, students being bound by traditional test-taking concepts, and the teaching environment not conducive to interactive teaching. Nevertheless, with the help of low-cost teaching methods, the gradual improvement of teachers' professional ability, and the innovative teaching method centered on students, the proposed linked speech teaching improvement plan is highly feasible on the basis of fully considering resource constraints, teachers' abilities and students' needs, and is expected to significantly improve students' English oral fluency and accuracy, and help them better communicate in English. Liaison is an important feature of phonetics, refers to the seamless connection of sounds between adjacent words, which can improve the fluency and authenticity of oral communication, such as the phrase "put it on". Chinese high school English learners face challenges due to the lack of similar phonetic features in Chinese, which leads them to neglect or overuse liaison and have difficulty mastering its complex rules. To overcome these problems, effective teaching methods include integrating liaison practice with daily language use, adopting a step-by-step approach from simple to complex, repeated practice through various exercises, and improving teaching materials to provide more explanations, diverse exercises, and better audio resources. These strategies are designed to build students' confidence and improve fluency so that they can master English liaison in oral communication.

Looking ahead, with the advancement of educational informatization, even schools with limited resources can obtain rich English connected reading teaching materials through the Internet, such as high-quality online courses, pronunciation demonstration videos, etc., to further enrich teaching resources. Schools can organize teachers to participate in professional phonetics training to improve teachers' understanding and teaching ability of phonetic phenomena such as connected reading. At the same time, by carrying out activities such as English corners and English drama performances, more immersive English communication environments can be created for students, allowing students to strengthen connected reading skills in practical application. Moreover, teachers can integrate intelligent teaching applications to offer students customized learning trajectories and targeted feedback. This approach enables students to more efficiently surmount the challenges encountered in linked-reading learning. As these initiatives are steadily put into practice, students will step by step appreciate the elegance of fluent language

achieved through linked reading during their English-learning journey. This not only boosts their overall English proficiency but also heightens their enthusiasm and self-assurance in learning English, thereby establishing a robust foundation for their future international interactions and development.

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