



Strategies to Reduce Students' Oral English Anxiety

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Abstract: With the further development of globalization, English as an international language is playing an increasingly important role in international communication and cooperation. Therefore, learning and mastering English well and being able to express and communicate in English fluently has also become an important learning task for contemporary students. Although our country attaches great importance to English education, due to the long-term impact of test-oriented education, our English teaching mainly focuses on the instillation of language knowledge, while the teaching of oral English is relatively ignored. This makes most students unable to master spoken English skills proficiently. Although some students have mastered the basic knowledge of English communication, when they need to use English for oral communication, they are still nervous, lack of self-confidence, and even make extremely simple expression errors, so that they cannot express fluently and accurately in English. This makes students gradually feel anxious about speaking English and then they decrease their English-speaking times by degrees. So, the problem of "dumb English" emerged. Therefore, anxiety has a large negative impact on the development and training of students' oral skills. Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to reduce students' oral English anxiety and help solve the problem of "dumb English".

Keywords: oral English anxiety, dumb English, English teaching

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

With the development of the times, the role of spoken English in daily life is becoming more and more vital. So, learning and mastering spoken English is an inevitable learning task for contemporary students. However, due to the long-term influence of test-oriented education, English education in China focuses more on the explanation of language knowledge, while relatively neglecting the cultivation of students' oral English. This gradually causes students to be unconfident and nervous when they need to communicate in English. This anxiety will have a negative impact on their English learning. If students' anxiety about oral English communication cannot be resolved in time, they will gradually become afraid of speaking English and will reject oral English, which will cause the phenomenon of "classroom silence" in English classrooms. Some researchers have pointed out that students' silence in class is mainly related to anxiety caused by insufficient oral skills (Rui&Ji,2017). What's more, students will also face the problem of "dumb English". The performance of "dumb English" is mainly that students are unwilling to speak and dare not speak, which reflects the connection between foreign language learning and learners' emotions (Su, 2017).

According to Chang (2018), as early as ten years ago, English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School, 2011 incorporated the emotional attitude into the component part of the curriculum goal for the first time, and put forward specific target requirements for cultivating students' emotional attitude in daily teaching. This shows that the importance of emotional factors in students' learning process has been gradually paid attention by our English education. Among the many emotional factors, foreign language anxiety is one of the most important emotional factors that affect students' foreign language learning. Therefore, it has received extensive attention from many researchers for a long time. Wang(2003) pointed out that oral anxiety is very common in the process of learning foreign languages, and it is the biggest learning obstacle for English learners. This phenomenon is more prominent in China. Therefore, this problem is urgently needed to be solved at present.

1.2 Purpose and significance

Oral English anxiety and how to reduce students' English-speaking anxiety will be discussed here. On the basis of previous research, some practical and specific teaching measures are proposed then. It is hoped that these measures will have a certain guiding role for high school foreign language teachers. It is also hoped that the implementation of these measures can really help high school students reduce their oral English anxiety, so that they can confidently and bravely communicate in fluent and accurate English when needed, so as to get rid of the dilemma of "dumb English".

2. Definition of relevant concepts

2.1 Foreign language anxiety

In the 1980s, American psychologist Horwitz first proposed the concept of "foreign language learning anxiety". According to Horwitz (1986), "foreign language anxiety" is the unique comprehensive psychology of self-perception, belief, emotion and behavior related to classroom language learning produced by the uniqueness of the language learning process. Later, Aida (1994) proposed that "foreign language anxiety" exists specifically in the process of language learning. And it is the obvious worries and fears about self-awareness, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning.

2.2 Oral English anxiety

In 1986, Horwitz proposed that oral anxiety refers to the anxiety that a learner produces when communicating in a foreign language, which affects the effect of communication. According to Gao (2013), the nervousness and fear that students show in oral English classes is called oral English anxiety.

3. Measures taken to reduce oral English anxiety

The causes of learners' oral English anxiety have been discussed above. So, some measures will be pointed out here for English teachers to help students reduce their oral English anxiety and overcome the problem of "dumb English".

Firstly, teachers should improve their teaching methods, enrich teaching content, and enhance students' learning motivation. It is necessary for English teachers to improve their own teaching methods. Nowadays, many English classrooms are teacher-centered teaching models. Teachers should uphold the student-centered teaching philosophy to improve their teaching methods. In the English class, let students speak more and give them more opportunities to practice oral English, which helps to reduce students' oral anxiety. In addition, the content of teaching should be connected with the life of the students, and the degree of difficulty of the teaching content should be moderate, in line with the students' "zone of proximal development". Apart from that, Teachers should design a variety of classroom oral activities, such as role-playing, English debates, storytelling with pictures, English dubbing competitions, etc., so as to arouse students' interest, enhance students' motivation, and cultivate interest in oral learning.

Secondly, it is unique important for teachers to establish a harmonious teacher-student relationship and build a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Harmonious teacher-student relationship is the foundation for smooth English teaching. It can make students feel relaxed and happy in the English class, and is conducive to the formation of a relaxed classroom atmosphere. In a relaxed classroom atmosphere, students' pressure will be relatively reduced, so the negative emotions, especially anxiety will be reduced. Moreover, a relaxed classroom atmosphere is more conducive to students' concentration, and it is also helpful for students' knowledge learning. If the English classroom has been in a serious and tense state, the students have been in such an atmosphere for a long time, and the internal emotions will be affected by external environmental factors, which will cause anxiety, tension and fear in the English classroom. As a result, students are even more reluctant to communicate or answer questions in English classes, which leads to oral anxiety. This is not only detrimental to students' English learning, but also has a negative impact on students' physical and mental health.

Thirdly, teachers should ask questions in class reasonably. Asking questions is the most common way for English teachers to interact in the classroom. However, if classroom questions are not used well, students will be afraid of answering questions, so that every time they take English class, they will think of the teacher asking questions, and then they will become anxious about English class. Making good use of classroom questioning can make the classroom more active. In an English class, the teacher must ensure that the instruction of the question can be understood by the students before asking the question. In addition, the answer to the question must have a certain connection with the content of the previous lecture, so that students can predict the answer based on what they have learned before, and the students will be more confident to answer the question. After the question is asked, leave enough time for the students to think or simply write down the answer. After the students have answered the question, they should give some earnest verbal evaluation instead of simply saying "good". Give more positive comments to help improve students' confidence in learning and protect their self-esteem. In this way, the anxiety of students will be reduced, and over time it will gradually reduce the anxiety of oral English.

4. Conclusion

Foreign language learning anxiety has always received widespread attention. Oral English anxiety, as one of foreign language anxiety, is a common problem faced by students in our country. If the problem of oral English anxiety is not solved, it will cause certain obstacles to the English learning of our students.

Based on the author's own experience and previous studies, some measures are proposed here to reduce students' oral

anxiety. It is hoped that these measures can provide some theoretical guidance for English teachers to solve the problem of students' oral anxiety in class. However, due to lack of experience and practice, the proposed measures have not been tested by practice, which is a shortcoming of this research.

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