

A Study on English Speaking Anxiety of College Students

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Abstract

Practice of English speaking in College English teaching is the key to the organic integration of language input and skills transformation, with the ultimate goal of achieving communicative competence. The anxiety of college students in oral practice will hinder the improvement of their communication ability in English speaking. The purpose of this study is to analyze the causes and effects of students' anxiety in English speaking, and to formulate corresponding teaching strategies, so as to alleviate the anxiety of students in oral practice, cultivate their self-confidence and sense of achievement, and meanwhile improve the quality of English teaching.

Keywords

College English; English Speaking Ability; Anxiety.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool of communication. The main purpose of learning a language is to communicate. Being influenced by exam oriented education, as for English teaching, most colleges and universities in our country focus on the cultivation of students' reading and writing ability. There are few training practices on listening and speaking. Due to the lack of practice, most college students are afraid of English speaking. When they express their opinions in English, they will feel anxious. As we know, the emergence of anxiety will lead to the decline of students' communicative competence and oral proficiency. That's why language anxiety, as the most important affective factor in foreign language learning, has attracted more and more attention of scholars at home and abroad in recent years. This papers is going to discuss the English speaking anxiety of college students.

2. ANXIETY AND ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY

Anxiety is a kind of feeling which makes people feel anxious about the events that may happen in the future, and also it is a psychological state of worrying about the bad results. In the process of College English learning, anxiety appears commonly among students. Horwitz, an American psychologist, first proposed the concept of foreign language learning anxiety. He defined foreign language learning anxiety as the unique psychology of self perception, belief, feeling and behavior related to language learning in classroom brought forth by the uniqueness of foreign language learning. When students are practicing oral English, their anxiety is mainly caused by their nervousness when they use English for expression. Specifically, there are pauses, repetitions, mistakes, stutters and self correction in oral expression when they are speaking English, and the students' in poor condition can't even say one word.

3. THE CAUSES AND INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY

First of all, the defect of students' individual character is the subjective factor for anxiety. Due to the influence of their own character, some students are often timid in nature and lack of self-confidence as well as risk-taking spirit. When such students express their opinions in English,

they pay too much attention to the grammar errors and pronunciation standards, and fear being ridiculed by others due to a series of low-level errors. Although the facts have fully shown that in daily oral communication, few people are aware of whether there are grammar and pronunciation errors, but this still cannot prevent such students from being anxious during their speaking. Second, over positioning oneself in the process of language learning is an important factor for anxiety. Most students will set certain goals for themselves in the process of English learning, but the positioning of oral practice is often inconsistent with their actual ability. Most of the students can't recognize their English learning ability very well, that is to say, they are positioned too high or too low. That's why they tend to find it difficult to achieve the expected goal on time by virtue of their existing ability, resulting in anxiety. On the contrary, when the self orientation is too low, the anxiety phenomenon appears much less. Finally, the external factors, such as the teaching content is too difficult, teachers' teaching methods and concepts are not right, are also the important reasons for students' oral anxiety.

Students are unable to communicate smoothly because of anxiety. In the process of students' oral English learning, anxiety causes many negative effects. In class, students may be too anxious to give a right answer to the questions. Anxiety can also lead to inaccurate pronunciation, tone change, or pause, mispronunciation, flustered self correction and other phenomena. Anxiety has become a "stumbling block" for students to give a modest performance, which also brings them a sense of psychological frustration. Anxiety will trigger students' resistance and even avoidance to English speaking, which will weaken students' enthusiasm to participate in oral practice, and even lead to some degree of depression. It is under the influence of such negative emotions that students become reluctant to speak actively and lose the desire to express themselves in English, and thus get into the passive state of silent sitting in oral activities in the classroom. In the long run, this tendency of language silence makes such students lose the opportunity of oral practice, so the English that they have learned becomes "mute English".

4. STRATEGIES FOR RELIEVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY

In this part, the author puts forward some strategies to alleviate students' Oral Anxiety from several aspects.

4.1. Establishing A Harmonious Relationship Between Teachers and Students

A good relationship between teachers and students can reduce students' learning anxiety. The relationship between teachers and students directly affects students' learning mood. Rosenthal Effect shows that when a teacher places high expectations on one student or some students, this student or these students will achieve higher results in the future. Teachers should take the initiative to establish a good teacher-student relationship with students, enhance students with a high sense of responsibility and full enthusiasm, and jointly create a teaching atmosphere of mutual cooperation and mutual respect to mobilize students' interest in learning. In the classroom, teaching activities should be carried out in a kind, friendly and generous teaching manner and humorous language, and made students' learning attitude, difficulties and experience as well as their views and requirements on teaching timely understood. And this will enable them to enter the best learning psychological state. English teachers should pay attention to the observation of students' speech and behavior; adopt different methods to teach different students with various characteristics. Teachers should hold different attitude toward the students with different degrees of anxiety, so as to cultivate and improve their oral expression ability respectively. For example, for the students who are bold, responsive and outgoing, when protecting their enthusiasm, teachers should be strict with them and give them high requirements, so that they can speak correctly, accurately and well. Meanwhile, teachers should be close to and pay attention to the students who are anxious and

sensitive in the oral class, give them warm attitude they expect, generate their implicit motivation, and cultivate their good habit of speaking and thinking.

4.2. Cultivating Students' Self-Confidence

Self confidence is a psychological state of self affirmation, self trust and believing that one's strength can achieve a certain goal, which can release one's potential continuously, and is an important guarantee for people to overcome difficulties and achieve success. When students make progress, teachers should praise them at the best time even if they make just a small progress, so that they can have enough self-confidence. When students make mistakes, teachers should guide them reasonably, without fierce criticism, but teach them mild and roundabout. Teachers should encourage and praise students in time to encourage their self-esteem and enhance their self-confidence. Their courage to face setbacks will increase, their anxiety will become lighter and lighter, and their attitude to failure will be calmer. When students have problems in the process of English speaking, teachers should help them overcome difficulties in time. With the help of teachers, students will gradually increase their confidence in English speaking, and students' anxiety will be relieved or eliminated, and the effect of English learning will be gradually improved too.

4.3. Guiding Students to Enjoy Autonomous Learning and Cooperative Learning

Students' anxiety usually comes from their fear of the unknown. Autonomous learning strategy is an effective strategy in foreign language learning. The initiative of autonomous learning is in students' own hands, and they can constantly carry out self-design, self-test, self-evaluation, self transformation and other automatic construction processes to acquire knowledge. The whole process is self-designed. Therefore, in the process of self-regulated learning, many causes of anxiety are omitted, which can relieve anxiety and promote learning. Besides autonomous learning, cooperative learning is also a good way to relieve oral anxiety. Each of the cooperative member undertakes a learning task, which may decompose the anxiety and reduce the learning pressure. At the same time, in the process of cooperative learning, students' internal potential will be brought into practice, and more opportunities for communication will be provided for shy introverts, and in this way, they can express their own ideas and relieve their anxiety.

4.4. Adjusting Methods for Error Correction

When teaching oral English, teachers should guide students to communicate in English bravely in class, to express their opinions bravely, to participate actively in language communication, and to finish English learning tasks happily. In the face of the students with anxiety, teacher can ask some simple questions so as to stimulate their interest in learning. When their answer is correct, teachers can use "well done", "very good", "perfect" and other words to praise the students, so that they can also experience the joy of success. In the process of classroom communication, teachers should not correct mistakes at any time. They should allow students to make mistakes, respect, understand and tolerate the students who make mistakes, and eliminate the psychological anxiety of students who are afraid of making mistakes and dare not to speak. Students' mistakes should be corrected with a positive attitude, and teachers shouldn't dampen their enthusiasm. On the contrary, they should try to guide students to find mistakes and correct them by themselves. If teachers have to point out students' mistakes, they should give them concrete and constructive suggestions, and should aim at the problem itself rather than the students. Only in this way can students have less pressure and psychological burden. Through this way, students dare to open their mouth, and they may constantly obtain a successful happy experience, and thus their confidence and desire in English speaking can be enhanced.

5. CONCLUSION

English speaking anxiety affects students' English speaking competence. It is also a huge obstacle for teachers to achieve teaching results. For students themselves, it is a strong enemy of their English learning. This negative emotion has a serious impact on the improvement of students' English speaking ability. Based on the analysis of the causes and effects of students' English speaking anxiety, this paper summarizes a variety of coping strategies, which will play a positive role in the practice of oral English teaching. In a word, the improvement of English speaking ability is a long and complex process. In the long-term teaching practice, teachers should constantly summarize teaching experience, improve teaching methods, create a good learning environment for students, and let them have a relaxed and unrestrained mood in English study.

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