

A Study on Oral Anxiety in Foreign Language Classes

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Abstract. Due to the development of globalization, people have higher and higher requirements for foreign language learning, and oral expression has become a difficult problem faced by many students. Oral anxiety has also appeared in many foreign language learning classes. This paper studies students' oral anxiety in foreign language classrooms. This paper first analyzes the origin and influence of language anxiety, and then discusses the forms of classroom oral anxiety and its influence in depth and detail, and discusses the influencing factors of oral anxiety from the aspects of subjective and objective factors. It is found that individual differences, learning motivation, self-evaluation, cultural background and values can form oral anxiety, which harms students' foreign language use and mental health. This study also tries to put forward some countermeasures to relieve international students' oral English anxiety in class, such as changing self-cognition, improving self-evaluation, establishing learning motivation, and jointly coping with and reducing oral English anxiety with teachers and schools.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, language anxiety, teaching method.

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization, more and more students choose to study abroad, in which oral expression ability is an important factor to consider. As a language output item, oral language has the characteristics of immediacy. Therefore, compared with the language skills that can be prepared in the early stage, such as listening, reading and writing, oral language output is more challenging for students and more likely to cause students' psychological anxiety. A large number of studies have shown that international students will have oral anxiety in the classroom learning stage, which will affect the learning effect of oral English. The research results show that language anxiety negatively affects academic performance, proficiency test results, and oral and written expression ability [1]. Especially in language skills, language anxiety is an important factor in the output of language skills, such as spoken language.

However, many international students often feel anxious in classroom oral expression, which not only affects their learning effect, but also affects the enthusiasm and activeness of the classroom atmosphere. The main purpose of learning a second foreign language is to be able to use it flexibly, and oral communication is inevitable for international students. Therefore, oral anxiety is an inevitable topic.

To sum up, it is of great significance to study the situation of international students' oral anxiety in class, explore its causes and influencing factors, and improve their oral expression ability and classroom atmosphere. Through investigation and analysis, this study aims to deeply understand the anxiety of international students in classroom oral expression, and provide a theoretical basis and practical guidance for solving this problem.

2. Overview of Foreign Language Anxiety

2.1. The Origin of Language Anxiety Research

In the early study on language anxiety, Gardner, Clement, Naiman, Stem et al. found that classroom anxiety was negatively correlated with foreign language proficiency. The lower the students' classroom anxiety, the higher their foreign language proficiency [2].

From the perspective of cognitive psychology, Tobias divides foreign language anxiety into anxiety in the language input stage, processing stage and output stage [3]. This study shows that learning anxiety will accompany the whole process of language learning, and excessive anxiety will cause a series of problems, such as decreased learning efficiency and inattention.

Horwitz, Cope et al. defined language anxiety as the unique psychology of self-perception, belief, feeling and behavior related to classroom language learning generated by the uniqueness of foreign language learning [4].

2.2. Influence of Language Anxiety

Some scholars have proposed that language anxiety can be divided into promoting anxiety and hindering anxiety [5]. The former can stimulate the learning motivation of learners, and they can improve the completion effect of their studies to a certain extent. However, the latter will hurt learning. Horwitz and Cope identified three components of foreign language anxiety: a) communication comprehension, b) fear of negative evaluation, and c) test anxiety [6]. Students who fear negative evaluation do not view language errors as a natural part of the learning process, but rather as a threat to their image and a source of negative evaluation from teachers or peers. As a result, they remain silent and withdrawn most of the time and do not participate in language activities.

3. Overview of Classroom Oral Anxiety

Horwitz et al. found that students feel anxious about learning a foreign language in class, which hurts foreign language learning [7]. Palacios pointed out that strong anxiety was caused by spoken language [7].

Woodrow used SLSAS to investigate Australian second language learners and a questionnaire method to find that learners have the strongest oral anxiety when they communicate with native English speakers [7].

3.1. Forms of Oral Anxiety

Research shows that language anxiety is often easy to observe, such as physical headache, shaking, sweating and other manifestations, psychological blank mind, stuttering, injury by the teacher questions.

Leibert and Morris the anxiety response can be classified as reflecting worry or emotionality. Emotionality refers to physiological responses, such as blushing or a racing heart, and behavioral responses, such as stuttering and fidgeting [8].

3.2. Influence of Oral Anxiety

Studies have shown that students who exhibit verbal anxiety are unwilling to communicate in the target language in front of others, especially in terms of speaking and listening skills.

Aida and McIntyre and Gardner have demonstrated that anxious foreign language students are less willing to participate in learning activities and their performance is lower than that of non-anxious students.

Phillips and Ganschow et al. used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale to study the impact of language anxiety on students' oral test scores, and the results showed that FLCAS was negatively correlated with oral test scores [1]. People with high levels of anxiety express less and have lower grades.

McIntyre, Knowles and Clement found that the four aspects of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, were negatively correlated with language anxiety. Compared with students with low anxiety, the expression ability and output quality of anxious students showed a downward trend as the degree of anxiety increased.

Qian Xujing concluded that the negative effects of anxiety on learning "listening, speaking, reading and writing" were "speaking, listening, reading and writing" in descending order [7].

Qian Xujing conducted a questionnaire survey on foreign students, and the results showed that anxiety had a negative impact on students' oral field of language learning. The stronger the anxiety, the lower the oral achievement [7].

Zhang Li took 15 international students as the survey objects to conduct oral fluency test, and the FLCAS test showed that the more anxious the international students were in learning a second language, the more negative their oral activities were; The less anxiety you feel, the more fluent your oral communication will be [7].

4. Influencing Factors of Oral Anxiety

4.1. Subjective Factors

4.1.1 Individual differences

Zhang Liying found through research that most international students have a positive attitude and interest in language, and subjective oral anxiety can be affected by students. If teachers can perceive students' anxiety and relieve their anxiety with appropriate teaching methods, they can better help students [8].

4.1.2 Learning motivation

Zhang Liying found through research that the main learning goal of East Asian international students is to pass the language test, and on this basis, to communicate with teachers and classmates. If the goal can be customized according to individual differences to generate motivation, it can reduce oral anxiety and improve oral English [9].

4.1.3 Self-evaluation

Through research, Shang Xiaoyu found that learners' oral anxiety and their self-cognition were negatively correlated with oral performance. The lower the self-cognition, the lower the oral performance, the more serious the oral anxiety [10].

4.2. Objective Factors

The research shows that the classroom environment has a significant impact on foreign students' oral anxiety. The classroom is a public formal environment, and the results of a study by McCluskey found that most people experience communication fear when talking to a group of people in a formal setting.

4.2.1 Teacher influence

The influence of teachers can be divided into questions and feedback.

Rowe and Nunan found that teachers usually ask students to answer directly after asking questions, but if the time is extended by 3 to 5 seconds, the enthusiasm and quality of students' answers will be improved. Therefore, it can be concluded that too short waiting time for teachers' questioning time will increase students' anxiety and affect classroom performance [5].

Teachers' feedback is also an important cause of students' oral anxiety. Constantly correcting students' mistakes. When students give wrong answers, teachers ask other students to correct mistakes and other behaviors will cause students' oral anxiety in class.

4.2.2 Cultural differences

The first is that there are differences in nationality groups, and studies have shown that people of different nationalities have different levels of anxiety.

Secondly, different nationalities represent different cultural backgrounds of students from different countries. For example, under the influence of Confucian culture in China, Chinese students tend to be more silent in class.

5. Measures to Relieve the Anxiety of International Students' Oral English in Class

5.1. Subjective Aspects

5.1.1 Actively engage with the outside world

External AIDS such as language proficiency tests and oral demonstration exercises help learners to recognize their oral ability and improve their interest in language learning. It is an inevitable process for students to have language anxiety, so it is necessary to establish a correct cognition of this short-term anxiety and adopt some relaxed ways to adjust it. Things like: talking to a tutor, traveling more [10].

5.1.2 Customize personal motivation

For many students, customizing goals that fit their personal profile creates motivation, and self-setting goals takes more effort than helping others set them. It is important to note that the goal needs to be a bit challenging and achievable. Basic students may aim to master basic words, and middle and advanced students may try to challenge some language tests [10].

5.1.3 Establish self-knowledge

Through practice and testing to improve self-evaluation and reduce anxiety, Shang Xiaoyu concluded that learners' oral anxiety value is extremely significantly negatively correlated with learners' self-perception of oral English level, that is, the higher the oral anxiety value, the lower the self-perception. Repeated practice and testing can make learners' cognition of their own level clearer and closer to reality, improve their proficiency in language use, and make them confident in oral expression and brave in trying [10].

5.2. Objective Aspects

5.2.1 Teaching environment

The suggested measures for the classroom are mainly divided into the teacher's questioning methods, feedback methods and teaching methods. First, teachers need to change the way they ask questions, from task-imperative questioning to a more friendly approach. Ren Haiyan investigated 116 international students and found that teachers' questioning attitude and kindness can effectively reduce students' anxiety by using literature, questionnaires, classroom observation and interview methods [5]. At the same time, adequate time should be provided for students to think. Secondly, in terms of classroom feedback, teachers can give feedback to students' answers in a timely manner, rather than asking other students to correct the mistakes of the original students after the students' answers are wrong. Finally, teachers need to adopt a variety of teaching methods to teach, avoid self-directed classes, interact with students more, and design a variety of classroom activities, so as to arouse students' interest in learning, improve class concentration and reduce students' anxiety.

5.2.2 School

Schools need to make teaching plans and objectives according to the actual situation of students.

Schools should teach students step by step. The teaching task should not be too difficult, and students should be able to reach it.

Schools should realize that the teaching goal of the second language should be to cultivate students' ability to use the second language, and provide students with a simulated and close to the real communication environment, or even a real communication environment [4].

Schools should respect the cultural differences of different countries and give more attention and understanding to students who are slow and introverted.

6. Conclusion

In terms of research objects, most studies focus on students whose second foreign language is English, and few studies on other languages. First, most of the research objects are high school and university students, and there is a lack of research on young international students. In terms of research methods, most studies use questionnaire and interview methods, and few studies combine quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Second, the final time of the survey was short and there was a lack of research on long-term effects. In the future research, in terms of research objects, the research can be carried out for young students; In the research method, quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis are combined; In terms of tracking time, the quantitative analysis of the tracking time of the research object was extended.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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