

Exploration of Oral English Teaching in Junior High School from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

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Abstract: Under the requirements of oral English in junior high school, the improvements of teaching method are necessary. Positive psychology aims at studying the meaningful parts of human life. This study explores the integration of positive psychology principles into the teaching of oral English in junior high schools. It emphasizes creating a positive classroom atmosphere, fostering supportive teacher-student interactions, designing engaging oral activities, and employing positive psychological interventions. By focusing on students' strengths, promoting positive emotions, and encouraging social interactions, the approach aims to boost students' confidence, motivation, and language proficiency. The findings suggest that this method not only enhances academic performance but also contributes to students' overall personal development and well-being, providing a valuable framework for effective oral English teaching.

Keywords: Junior High School; Oral English Teaching; Positive Psychology.

1. Introduction

As the coming of new age, the requirements for junior high school students are rising continuously. In the aspect of English learning, the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards propose that the standards have set specific goals. The students should contain corresponding abilities in English learning. As for English speaking, the standards propose that students ought to understand clear pronunciation and slow-paced short oral expressions to extract key information, to spell words according to pronunciation rules and phonetic symbols, use the learned language to engage in daily communication with others, maintain basic correctness in pronunciation, intonation, and word choice, and express ideas relatively and correctly.

According to the standards, teachers must improve their teaching methods to help students to reach the goals. However, most students are unwilling to speak English in public. Some of them are not confident about their pronunciation, the others are not sure about their language correctness. Based on this, teachers have the responsibility to guide students to learn oral English confidently and joyfully.

To realize the target, it is beneficial to apply positive psychology into oral English teaching and learning. Positive psychology is A science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions. It promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless[1]. Positive psychology is applied in several areas, like education, business management, community construction and so on. Thus, applying positive psychology into oral English teaching could assist students to improve their confidence while speaking English.

Based on this, this paper aims to address the following questions: 1. Is Positive Psychology beneficial to Students' oral English learning? 2. How to integrate the Positive Psychology into oral English teaching design? The goal is to provide reference designs for junior high school English oral teaching activities and promote the efficiency of oral teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research on Positive Psychology

Lots of researchers defined positive psychology. There are major definitions. It is nothing more than the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues. Positive psychology revisits "the average person," with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving ... positive psychology is simply psychology[2]. Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions[3]. The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities[1].

Through the definition, it's obvious that positive psychology aims at studying and promoting positive sides of human life. It seeks to understand and enhance the factors that contribute to a meaningful life. As for education, it can help students to figure out the meaningful aspects of their life and study so that they can be more confident.

2.2. Research on Oral English Teaching

The research about oral English teaching focuses on teaching methods, teaching resources, assessment methods and so on. Video blogs and role-playing are integrated into oral English teaching. Through classroom practice, it showed that students were highly interested in VBRP (the Video Blog-Based Role Play) lessons and actively participated in classroom activities[4]. As for teaching resources, most teachers wish to have access to richer teaching resources to enhance the efficiency of oral teaching[5]. Besides, at the aspect of assessment, authenticity assessment is applied into oral teaching. The research points out that teachers often fail to use authenticity assessment appropriately and still tend to rely on traditional assessment methods, neglecting unfamiliar assessment methods like personal assessment and learning portfolio assessment[6].

2.3. Research on the Integration of Positive Psychology and Language Teaching

In the aspect of teaching, positive psychology is mainly applied into second language learning, classroom intervention and so on. As for second language learning and teaching, the elements of positive psychology are applied into education system, policy practices. It showed that the model can help teachers to be aware of the significance of positive teacher-student relationships, positive emotional experiences, and positive environmental factors in students' enjoyment, effective performance, and success[7]. As for classroom intervention, it shows that positive psychology programs are significantly related to student well-being, relationships and academic performance. The positive psychology interventions in schools should be further developed[8].

3. Theoretical Foundation

3.1. Broaden-and-Build Theory

The Broaden-and-Build Theory is proposed by Barbara Fredrickson. It posits that positive emotions not only make individuals feel good but also expand their thinking and behavioral repertoires, helping them to build enduring personal resources. These resources may include knowledge, skills, and social connections, which are critical factors. As for students, positive emotions could stimulate their stronger intrinsic motivation in students[9].

3.2. Self Determination

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, emphasizes the importance of fulfilling basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) in enhancing psychological health and well-being. In the context of oral English learning, social support systems (such as teachers, peers, and parents) can meet students' needs for relatedness, thereby enhancing their learning motivation and self-confidence. By providing emotional support, academic guidance, and positive feedback, social support systems can help students experience more positive emotions and a greater sense of achievement throughout the learning process[10].

3.3. Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory examines the impact of social networks and relationships on individuals' psychological and physical health. A robust social support system can offer emotional support (such as encouragement and comfort), informational support (such as providing learning resources and advice), and instrumental support (such as practical help and resource provision), thereby improving individuals' coping strategies and adaptability. In the context of oral English learning, the presence and effectiveness of social support systems can significantly enhance students' learning experiences and oral proficiency, helping them overcome difficulties and challenges in their studies[10].

4. Teaching Design of Oral English Teaching from the Perspective of Positive Psychology

4.1. Create a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

To create a positive classroom atmosphere, teachers could encourage and motivate students. At the same time, teacher

could foster a positive language communication environment.

On the one hand, teacher can acknowledge students' efforts and accomplishments, help students set realistic goals so that students can build confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Through the steps above, teachers could provide feedback about students' performance.

On the other hand, to foster an excellent language environment, teachers can encourage open communication to make students feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of judgment. Besides, teachers can use group activities and peer assessments to encourage students to speak English aloud.

4.2. Build Positive Teacher-student Interaction Models

Positive teacher-student interaction is essential to students' learning. To construct the ideal interaction models, teachers could involve students in decision-making processes regarding classroom rules and activities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Effective communication techniques should also be constructed. It concludes two aspects. The first part is active listening. Teachers should practice active listening, showing students that their thoughts and opinions are valued. The second part is empathetic communication. Teacher should use empathetic communication to understand students' perspective and respond to their emotional and academic needs appropriately.

4.3. Design Copious and Colorful Oral Activities

To build students' confidence and arouse their learning interests, multiple and various oral activities are required. Teacher should design corresponding oral activities based on the principle of positive psychology. The oral activities could be role-playing, debates and storytelling. The teacher can also apply the topic that the students are interested in into the activities.

As for the principles of designing oral activities based on positive psychology, it's important to focus on strengths, encourage positive emotions and promote social interaction. The activities which focus on strengths could allow students to leverage their strengths and build confidence. The activities that encourage positive emotions could contain the emotions like humor, curiosity and so on. To boost interaction, the activities can contain collaboration and communication.

4.4. Utilize Positive Psychological Interventions

Using positive psychological intervention techniques can significantly enhance students' learning experience.

As for the interventions, there are two main types. The one is strength-based intervention. It focuses on students' strengths rather than weaknesses to build their confidence and motivation. The other one is growth mindset intervention. It encourages a growth mindset by emphasizing the importance of effort and persistence in achieving success.

At the same time, the teacher should pay much attention to positive self-talk training, which can help students overcome self-doubt and build confidence. It could conclude affirmations, encouragement and cognitive restructuring.

5. Implementation and Evaluation of Teaching Design

5.1. Implementation Process

Based on positive psychology, this study designs teaching activities. There are some examples which embody the principles of positive psychology. The class is taken from PEP edition, 7 grade, unit 11 “How was your school trip?”. The class aims at guide students to learn words about farm and corresponding sentences. Students are required to use the sentence patterns while communicating with others. The class concludes 8 steps which can be divided into 3 periods. Here are the specific teaching procedures.

The first period is pre-listening. At this part, teacher greets students at first and shows students a farm trip video. This step introduces the topic smoothly and activate interest. Then, the teacher creates a scenario about Carol’s farm trip. Based on this context, teacher guides students to learn words and phrased about farming, which can lay a foundation for learning expressions, practice observation skills.

The second period is while-listening. At this part, teacher leads students to finish the listening activities on the book. Through the exercises, students can deepen their understanding of words and phrases. After the listening, the students are required to practice the conversation. During the conversation practice, the teacher will give assessment immediately, helping students to know about their level clearly. At the same time, teacher should encourage and motivate students about their speaking. The motivation can’t be simple and general words, but to be specific and personalized.

The third period is post-listening. This stage is to guide students to finish group work. They need to discuss with their group members firstly. And then they need to divide the task. In the end, students are required to do reports. During the process, teacher should help students to solve problems and assess students’ performances from the perspectives of pronunciation, intonation, fluency and so on. The most important one for teacher is to encourage and motivate students to speak English confidently.

5.2. Analysis of Implementation Effects

5.2.1. Create Positive Classroom Atmosphere

For the first period, the use of a farm trip video and the warm greeting set a welcoming and engaging tone for the lesson. This aligns with the principles of positive psychology by creating an environment that stimulates interest and makes students feel comfortable and valued from the outset.

During the listening activities, the structured exercises help students focus and engage with the content. Immediate assessment and specific, personalized feedback from the teacher reinforce a positive learning experience, boosting students’ confidence and sense of achievement.

Besides, Group work and discussions promote a collaborative learning environment. This collective approach helps students feel part of a supportive community, reducing anxiety and encouraging open communication.

5.2.2. Construct Positive Teacher-Student Interaction

By creating a scenario about Carol’s farm trip, the teacher relates the lesson content to real-life experiences, which enhances relevance and student engagement. This approach fosters a sense of connection and understanding between the teacher and students, promoting a positive and supportive

learning environment.

The teacher’s immediate feedback during conversation practice demonstrates active listening and empathetic communication, making students feel heard and supported. This positive interaction model helps build trust and encourages students to participate more actively.

The teacher’s role in facilitating group work and providing ongoing support helps maintain positive interactions. By addressing students’ challenges and providing constructive feedback, the teacher fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect in the classroom.

5.2.3. Various and Effective Teaching Activities

The scenario-based introduction and the focus on learning words and phrases about farming cater to different learning styles and leverage students’ interests and strengths. This approach helps to build confidence and positive emotions, which are essential for effective learning according to positive psychology principles.

The teacher’s immediate feedback during conversation practice demonstrates active listening and empathetic communication, making students feel heard and supported. This positive interaction model helps build trust and encourages students to participate more actively.

Group discussions and task division enhance social interaction and communication skills. By involving students in collaborative tasks, the teacher leverages their strengths and promotes positive emotions such as enthusiasm and curiosity.

6. Conclusion

Incorporating positive psychology into junior high school oral English teaching enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. The key is to foster a supportive and motivating environment. Creating a positive classroom atmosphere, encouraging supportive teacher-student interactions, designing varied and engaging activities, and utilizing positive psychological interventions build students’ confidence and motivation. The emphasis on students’ strengths, positive emotions, and social interactions not only improves language skills but also supports personal growth and well-being. This approach benefits both academic success and overall development, making it a valuable strategy for effective teaching.

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