

Measures to Alleviate Senior High School Students' Listening Anxiety

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Abstract

Anxiety is a sense of anxiousness one feels when engaged in a complex task. It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, and worry. Anxiety makes learners nervous and afraid, and thus contributes to learners' poor performance. Vogely (1999) claimed that one of the most ignored but potentially one of the most debilitating type of anxiety is the anxiety that accompanies listening comprehension. Anxiety is a major obstacle for senior high school students' listening learning, but fortunately anxiety can be alleviated.

Keywords : listening anxiety; countermeasures; senior high school teaching

1. Introduction

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four major skills of English learning, and listening is the basis and premise of speaking. However, in practical teaching, some teachers often overlook the improvement of students' listening ability and pay more attention to students' literacy and test-taking ability, which leads to high scores in written examinations but poor performance in listening. Listening and speaking skills have always been stagnant. Listening is the premise of speaking and reading and writing. Without good listening skills,

even if you are able to read and write, you cannot speak English fluently. In current senior high school English listening class, due to different reasons, the writer finds that many students have different levels of listening anxiety, which tremendously hinders the study of students' English listening. How to alleviate the senior high school students' listening anxiety and improve listening teaching effect is of great significance for the senior high school English teachers. Therefore, this article tries to seek and analyze the causes that lead to the anxiety of senior high school students' English listening and tries to find possible measures that may help relieve the high anxiety in their English listening.

2. Problem identification

Listening anxiety refers to the tension, anxiety, worry, fear and other emotions that a foreign language learner has in the listening class. The author believes that the factors affecting foreign language listening anxiety involves listening materials, listening class atmosphere and learner factors.

2.1 Listening materials

First, the difficulty of listening materials is closely related to foreign language listening anxiety. The harder the listening material is (the more complex the syntax, the faster the speech, and the shorter the pause), the more likely it is that the learner has listening anxiety. Second, the form of listening materials is also an important cause of anxiety for learners. According to a survey, half of learners believe if they are familiar with the listening topics and the vocabulary in the materials they listen to, they may feel less stressed. In addition, researchers have found that fast delivery of the listening material and limited the times of listening can also cause learning anxiety. Therefore, appropriately increase the intelligibility and clarity of material input can have an effect on relieving anxiety.

2.2 The dull and stressed classroom atmosphere

The classroom atmosphere is also called the classroom's psychological atmosphere. It mainly refers to a comprehensive performance of the dominant attitude and emotion in the classroom. A relaxed classroom atmosphere allows learners to have a positive learning attitude and a pleasant and successful experience. A depressive atmosphere often causes students to become tired, bored and anxious. In general, the classroom environment is an important factor that causes language learning anxiety. Over the years, the discussion of classroom atmosphere and anxiety has shown that there is a close relationship between the atmosphere of the listening class created by the teacher and the emotional state of the students. The poor communication between teachers and students, the old-fashioned teaching procedures are the main reasons for the anxiety of learners.

2.3 Learner factors

(1) Different listening comprehension level

The level of listening comprehension is different among learners, and the level of listening anxiety is also different. Studies have shown that the higher the learner's level of listening comprehension is, the lower the anxiety level is. Those with a high level of listening comprehension can not only fully understand the listening content but also have a high degree of confidence in answering questions. For them, maintaining moderate anxiety helps to promote their listening comprehension; for lower achievement learners, the limited level of listening comprehension makes it difficult for them to deal with the same difficult listening material, resulting in higher levels of anxiety and impede their listening comprehension.

(2) Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a judgment of whether one can effectively perform a certain behavior. The self-efficacy determines the individual's state of emergency and the emotional response to anxiety. Students with high self-efficacy feel more confident in completing their learning tasks. As a result, they experience lower levels of stress and anxiety. Many studies have shown that negative self-efficacy of learners is an important variable that causes listening anxiety. In the process of listening comprehension, people with strong self-efficacy believe in their comprehension skills, dare to accept challenges and overcome difficulties, and maintain their anxiety levels at a moderate level. As a result, their brains are more active and their minds are more flexible. However, learners with weak self-efficacy are skeptical about their listening abilities, and they often experience interruptions in their thinking and anxiety when they encounter difficult problems, which affects their listening comprehension.

3. Solutions

3.1 Focus on the choice of listening materials

The speed of the listening, the level of vocabulary, the length of listening materials and the topic of the materials will tremendously influence learners' listening comprehension. According to Fan Ning(2011), When learners fail to follow the speed of the recording, they would become irritable, which will hinders their comprehension of the listening materials and the development of their listening skills. The fast delivery of the listening materials is more likely to increase learners' listening anxiety. Appropriate listening materials can effectively eliminate learner fears, anxiety, and establish their confidence in learning. First, the materials should be graded according to the level of listening of most students. Texts with a slower speaking rate, clearer sentences, and moderate difficulty can be used first, and students can then be exposed to higher difficulty materials that faster. Second, Moderate listening materials should be typical. Finally, select some common and practical listening materials, such as dialogues, interviews, news reports, etc.

3.2 Create a relaxed listening class atmosphere

Study shows that if students are over-stressed during the listening process, they will have unpleasant symptoms, and they are unable to concentrate on the listening materials and have no ideas about what they have listened, which will greatly reduce the listening effect. Therefore, teachers should create a relaxed and harmonious atmosphere for students in the classroom to eliminate the psychological barriers such as fear, tension and anxiety caused by students' English listening. Psychologists believe that positive emotions such as happiness, confidence, hope, and optimism not only make people healthy, but also optimize the working state of the brain. In fact, the teacher's smile and encourage can give students a relaxed and happy psychological feeling, inspire their strong interest in learning, and thus improve the effectiveness of listening training.

3.3 Cultivate learners' listening strategies

Learning strategies are the methods or techniques that language learners use for effective learning. Generally speaking, learning strategies are problem-oriented. That is to say when learner meet some problem they tend to use learning strategy to solve them. For example, different learners may use different learning strategies to remember new words or sentence structures. Learning strategies are techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning, recalling of both linguistic and content area information (Chamot,1987). Learning strategies are specific action or techniques taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed and more transferable to new situation (Oxford,1990).Studies have proved that strategic training can relieve listening anxiety and improve the effectiveness of listening comprehension. Therefore, teachers should guide students to use listening strategies. First, guide students to prepare for the event. First, Find the keywords in the title so that you can focus on listening. Second, cultivate students' listening habits. Write notes with emphasis, especially information, figures, dates, and some proper nouns related to the problem. Finally, the students are encouraged to evaluate the situation and results of the use of strategies in the listening process in the form of self-statements or group discussions.

3.4 Enhance students' self-efficacy

Cultivating students' self-efficacy is an effective way to relieve anxiety and improve their listening ability. Students can be more confident by increasing the students' achievement experience in the teaching process.

Teachers' expectations and praise can also increase students' self-confidence and give them tremendous motivation to learn, so teachers should try to appreciate students' merits, and encourage them to

3.5 Cultivate students' active learning attitude

Confronted with difficulty, learners are either tend to face it bravely or escape from it. Learners with positive attitude would try to overcome the difficulty, and become a successful learner, while learners with negative attitude may fail to do so. Nurturing students' active learning attitude can not only reduce their anxiety but also build their confidence, so it is of great importance for teachers to cultivate students' active learning attitude and learning confidence.

4. Conclusion

All in all, alleviating the anxiety of students in English listening tests requires the cooperation of teachers and students. In this process, teachers should persistently implement meticulous guidance, and give students some positive feedbacks. Students should establish confidence, and learn to cultivate good listening habits, mastering some listening strategies, and having a sound attitude.

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