

Measures to Reduce Foreign Language Beginners' Communication Anxiety

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Abstract

Nowadays, communication anxiety has become a big barrier to hinder peoples' foreign language learning and oral expression. This paper is intended to help foreign language beginners relieve communication anxiety by exploring the cause of foreign language beginners' communication anxiety. The main body of this paper includes two parts. For one thing, it analyzes part of reasons for beginners' communication anxiety from psychology and language aspects. For another, it provides a few suggestions from beginners and teachers.

Keywords

Communication Anxiety; Foreign Language Beginners; Psychology and Language Aspects; Few Suggestions from Beginners and Teachers.

1. Introduction

1.1. Notion of Foreign Language Communication Anxiety

One common definition was put forward by Spielberger (1983), in which anxiety was used to refer to an unpleasant emotional condition characterizing feelings of apprehension and tension (cited in Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2014).

Horwitz et al.(1986) posed that "Foreign language anxiety is a distinct complex of feelings, self-perceptions, beliefs and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process"(p.128).

As regards communication apprehension, Horwitz et al. (1986) defined it as "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (p.127).

1.2. Significance and Purpose of the Study

In the process of foreign language learning, many people have more or less foreign language anxiety. In particular, it often exerts negative effect on foreign language communication. As known to all, high anxiety often leads to communication failure. Therefore, it's necessary for foreign language beginners to overcome communication anxiety.

This study aims to provide some advice to help foreign language beginners lower their communication anxiety so that beginners can improve their communicative ability and foreign language level.

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. In Psychology

One common reason for most beginners of foreign language learning is that they lack confidence to speak. They don't dare to communicate by using foreign language. For example, some beginners, especially who are introvert, may have enough language ability to communicate, but they scare to communicate or use a language that they are unfamiliar to communicate. Another psychological reason for beginners' communication anxiety is afraid of

making mistakes. Before they speak, they may think a lot, like care a lot about their face or be laughed by others. The lack of confidence makes beginners more anxious about foreign language communication.

2.2. In Language

2.2.1. Limited Vocabulary

At the beginning of foreign language learning, learners' vocabulary is limited. However, the vocabulary is not limited in communication. They may talk about an area that the words beginners didn't learn. So they don't know how to express what they think in their mind completely. In such case, they may become more anxious about their foreign language communication.

2.2.2. Low Listening Ability

Communication is an interactive activity, including listening what the speaker said and speaking what they want to express. It's no doubt that beginners' listening ability is also limited, and it's difficult for them to listen and understand completely. They are not willing to communicate if they can't understand each other. Therefore, listening incompetence is a big barrier for fluent and efficient communication, and the sense of anxiety rises naturally.

2.2.3. Nonstandard Pronunciation

Although it's impossible for beginners to pronounce like native speaker, but the pronunciation should be accurate and easy to understand by listeners. Result from teachers' personal accent or the difference with mother tongue, beginners may have some difficulties in pronunciation. When beginners can't pronounce accurately, they are not ready to talk with people and communication anxiety comes naturally.

3. Measures Taken to Reduce Communication Anxiety

As stated above, communication anxiety often exerts negative effect on communication. To achieve successful communication, there are some tips to help foreign language beginners to reduce anxiety.

3.1. For Beginners

3.1.1. Overcoming Psychological Barriers

On one hand, beginners are supposed to be confident with themselves. For foreign language learners, especially beginners, the establishment of confidence is of great importance. Based on the affective filter hypothesis by Krashen, it holds that low self-confidence is not conducive to comprehensible input into the second language acquisition and may affect the efficiency of foreign language learning. (quoted from Zhang qingzong, 2011). Therefore, beginners should dare to speak more, and communicate with others through using foreign language to help them build up their confidence. Only when beginners are confident and comfortable to speak, will they low their communication anxiety.

On the other hand, beginners should allow themselves to make mistakes. The most important thing in communication is fluency. There is no need to correct every mistake in communication, so the teacher can let some trivial mistakes go. Actually, making mistakes is not the key to making beginners feel anxious, but the reactions of teachers and peer learners after making mistakes. It's better for teachers to give positive and encouraging feedback to defuse beginners' embarrassment. At the same time, the teacher should also pay attention to the way of correction, using indirect corrections instead of direct.

3.1.2. Developing Language Ability

The fundamental cause of beginners' communication anxiety is low language ability. The key to reducing beginners' communication anxiety is to help them improve foreign language ability, especially speaking ability.

First of all, beginners can enlarge their vocabularies. Reading is a fast way to help beginners enlarge their vocabularies. As for beginners, they can select some books that they are interested to read, such as fairy tales, fables, picture books and etc. In this way, beginners can accumulate a large vocabulary so that they can know how to express in communication.

What's more, improving listening ability is also inevitable to reduce communication anxiety.

Last but not the least, practicing pronunciation should be attached great importance. Imitation is the best way for foreign language beginners to practice their pronunciation.

3.2. For Teachers

3.2.1. Providing Sufficient Chance for Beginners to Communicate

For most foreign language beginners who are learning foreign language at local school, the classroom is the only place for them to communicate by using foreign language. So creating a foreign language speaking environment for teachers to maximize communication opportunity is crucial for beginners to develop their communicative ability and further lower their communicative anxiety. Just as an old going says, practice makes perfect. The more communication chance they have, the more familiar they are with foreign language. Therefore, they will become less anxious about foreign language anxiety as long as they are skilled enough.

3.2.2. Paying Attention to the Ways of Correction

It's inevitable for foreign language learning beginners to make mistakes in communication. Teachers should allow beginners to make mistakes and it's better to adopt indirect corrections. If the teacher interrupts beginners' to correct mistakes directly during the process of communication, it may affect the fluency of their talking and make beginners feel embarrassed or lose face. What's worse, it will discourage their enthusiasm and confidence about speaking. To avoid this, teachers should give more encouragement and supportive feedback when beginners making mistakes to protect their self-esteem. At the same time, it's not wise to correct every mistake for teachers in communication. Teachers should let some trivial mistakes go so that the conversation can keep going fluently and successfully.

3.2.3. Introducing more Cultural Background Knowledge

It is also necessary to introduce cultural background knowledge into teaching. The more information beginners know about the topic, the easier they talk to each other. For example, teachers can introduce the social customs, language habits, cultural differences to help beginners have a better understanding of foreign language. What's more, teachers can use multi-media, such as film, songs and so on, to help beginners to learn more about foreign language culture. Not only can it cultivate beginners' interest in foreign language, but also develop their cultural awareness.

Only when beginners have enough knowledge about foreign language, can they reduce or even eliminate communication anxiety.

3.2.4. Improving Teaching Method

Under the requirements of the new curriculum standard, the traditional teaching model and methods have outdated. Teachers have to constantly adjust and improve their teaching method to meet the need of the times. In order to relieve foreign language beginners' communication anxiety, teachers can adopt communicative language teaching method in class and hold the learner-centered teaching belief. Teachers should design more communicative activities for

students to interact and speak less in class so that students have more opportunities to communicate using foreign language.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, people's communication anxiety often functions negatively in foreign language communication. The main reasons for foreign language beginners' communication anxiety are lacking of confidence and the insufficient language ability.

To help foreign language beginners reduce communication anxiety, on one hand, beginners need to overcome their psychological obstacles and try to be more confident in communication. On the other hand, teachers have to help beginners develop communicative skills and strategies so that they can have a lower communication anxiety.

This study has its own limitations, for example, the cause of beginners' communication anxiety is not comprehensive enough. It analyzes the reasons mainly from beginners' themselves, but in fact, teaching models or methods may lead to beginners' communication anxiety.

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