

How to Help High School Students' Reduce English Writing Anxiety

Chunyan Wu

School of China West Normal University, Nanchong, China

Abstract

As one of the important language output forms in the process of English learning, English writing is self-evidently important. For senior high school students, English writing is also a relatively difficult section. However, in actual teaching, most teachers spend a lot of time on language knowledge teaching, focusing on students' understanding of language knowledge, rather than students' use of language. The result is that students don't know how to accurately express themselves in English, which causes great anxiety about English writing. It not only restrains students' English writing, but also affects their interest in English learning. In view of this, this paper explores the causes of their anxiety and introduces some strategies for relieving the anxiety of senior high school students in English writing.

Keywords

High School Students; English Writing Anxiety; Strategies.

1. Introduction

According to the New English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2020), the purpose of learning language knowledge is to develop the ability of language using. And pragmatic knowledge refers to the knowledge of accurately understanding others and appropriately expressing oneself in a specific context. Writing, as an expressive skill, should be emphasized. Weigle (2011) put that in addition to language knowledge and language ability, motivation and affective factors can also affect the performance of the writing level. In fact, a considerable number of foreign language learners have anxiety, such as nervousness, restlessness and fear due to various reasons in the writing process, which seriously hinders the development of their writing ability and even affects their enthusiasm and interest in foreign language learning.

Therefore, it's necessary for us to understand the current situation and reasons for learners' writing anxiety, and then to adopt targeted intervention to inhibit and overcome their foreign language writing anxiety.

The purpose of this paper is to understand the situation of high school students' English writing anxiety, and put forward some teaching strategies and methods to release their English writing anxiety. And it is significant for improving high school students' English writing level, and then improving the efficiency and performance of English learning.

2. Problem Identification

2.1. Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a synthesis of self-awareness, beliefs, emotions and behaviors related to classroom foreign language learning due to the uniqueness of the foreign language learning process. (Horwitz et al, 1986)

Foreign language learning anxiety is the obvious fear and tension in the emotion and behavior of learners in the process of second language acquisition. (Aida, 1994)

Foreign language learning anxiety is a psychological state of restlessness, irritability, frustration and fear of making mistakes in the process of foreign language learning. (D.X. Jiang & J. He, 2010)

2.2. Writing Anxiety

Foreign language writing anxiety refers to a kind of anxiety that learners have in the process of writing. They don't want to write essays and let others to review their compositions. (Daly & Miller, 1975)

Writing anxiety refers to the anxiety such as tension, unease and fear that have a negative impact on the quality of written text output, and the improvement of writing level. And it is due to the poor performance or some defects of the writer's individual factors and writing process factors during the learning or training of English writing in class. (L.R. Bai, 2017)

2.3. The Causes of High School Students' Writing Anxiety

The causes of high school students' English writing anxiety include the individual internal causes and external writing process causes. The former involves the learner's expression ability, language ability and text ability, while the latter involves review feedback, task characteristics and output mode. (L.R. Bai, 2017)

At present, the teaching methods of English teachers are not attractive, which causes students to lose interest in English writing and have a low English writing ability, which is a common problem in the teaching process of senior high school English writing. The main reasons for this are students' limited vocabulary, weak English foundation and teachers' unattractive teaching methods. And the importance of English writing has not been fully recognized. (L.N. Sun, 2023)

3. Measures of Reducing Writing Anxiety

After knowing the causes of high school students' writing anxiety, and there are some teaching strategies which can be used to reduce writing anxiety.

3.1. Pay Attention to Knowledge Accumulation and Lay a Foundation for Writing to Reduce Writing Anxiety

The main reason why students are reluctant to write is that they cannot come up with anything to write and then a sense of anxiety will be generated. However, writing belongs to language output. Language output is based on language input. Therefore, the acquisition of basic language knowledge is the prerequisite for students to write. Without enough language input, it's difficult for students to express themselves in foreign language. Therefore, it's necessary for teachers to guide students to increase the amount of language input. They shouldn't just focus on textbook but encourage students to accumulate and imitate the use of language through extra-curricular materials, network resources or other learning materials.

3.2. Relate Writing Context to Learners' Real Life and Create Harmonious and Relaxed Atmosphere to Reduce Writing Anxiety.

English curriculum of senior high school includes three thematic contexts: man and self, man and society, and man and nature. (D.M. Mei & Q.Wang, 2018). And they are all related to students' real life and experience, so that the topic of writing task should be familiar and interesting for students to write. Only in this way, students can have something to write. And, to set up writing tasks with real communicative context, which can make students have the need and impulse to freely express their own opinions and thoughts when facing certain real situations. To some extent, it can also eliminate the negative effects of writing anxiety of testing.

3.3. Teach Students Writing Strategies and Improve Their Writing Ability to Reduce Writing Anxiety

Strategy refers to the special measures, techniques and methods adopted to enhance the learning effect. (X.T.Chen &M.Zheng, 2002). As for writing, strategy mainly includes planning strategy, process strategy and revision strategy. (H.X. Lu, 2023). And teacher can teach student different strategies and let them practice and adjust their writing strategies according to their individual differences. For example, before the writing, as for planning strategy, teachers can guide students to construct their writing through the use of mind mapping, brainstorming, critical reading and other activities.

3.4. Provide Positive Feedback and Cultivate Students' Confidence to Reduce Writing Anxiety

Progress in writing is usually a slow process and it is not easily observed. And this can easily discourage students. Therefore, enabling students to experience a sense of achievement is crucial in motivating students to continue practice writing. (Q.Wang , 2006) In short, teachers need to provide more encouragement and appreciation rather than criticize. As for writing feedback, teachers should pay more attention to the advantages of students' writing to affirm their strengths, which contributes to give them a sense of achievement and build their writing confidence. Therefore, students will actively participate in writing rather than be anxious or depressed.

4. Conclusion

All in all, most high school students have writing anxiety, which seriously affects their enthusiasm for writing. Therefore, teachers should take different measures to guide students to hold a positive attitude towards writing and create a harmonious and relaxed classroom atmosphere to effectively relieve students' writing anxiety. Then students' writing interest and enthusiasm can be stimulated and their writing ability can be improved.

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