



The Implications of Affective Filter Hypothesis on Listening Teaching of Junior High School Students

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Abstract: In second language acquisition, the four basic skills repeatedly emphasized are "listening", "speaking", "reading" and "writing". Listening comes first which is a basic skill of practical application of language. Effective listening practice is not only one of the significant means of effective input, but also becomes an indispensable part in the process of learning a new language. According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, emotional factors are vital for learners' learning process. Therefore, teachers should utilize students' emotional factors actively and consciously. Based on the affective filter hypothesis of Krashen's second language acquisition theory, this paper seeks to explore some implications for English listening teaching according to the actuality of junior middle school teaching.

Keywords: Second language acquisition; Affective filter hypothesis; English listening teaching; Emotional factors;

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

In 1977, Dulay and Burt first proposed the concept of "affective filtering" and defined it as: "an internal processing system that subconsciously prevents the learner from absorbing language based on emotional factors"^[1]. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is primarily aimed at how learners acquire or learn an additional language after they have acquired their first language. As a result of the study of second language acquisition, the theory of Krashen, an American linguist, was formed in the late 1970s. The "Monitor Model" consists of five hypotheses, namely, Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis^[2].

In this era of globalization, most of countries put English education in a prominent position in the development strategy of basic education. English learning mainly includes the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening ranks first. It can be seen that listening is the most basic skill in learning English, the intermediary for learners to get all kinds of information, and the foundation for the three skills of speaking, reading and writing. For a long time, a large number of teachers in China have given much more weight to the students' acquisition of language knowledge and the development of language skills, thus neglecting the students' leading role in the process of English learning and the effect of their own internal affective factors on learning outcome.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Study Abroad Dynamic

Oxford and Nyikos studied the "affective filter hypothesis" through classroom teaching, observation and questionnaire survey to study the influence of language learners' differences in age, motivation and other factors on

language learning performance^[3]. Finally, they find that the motivation of language learning is a crucial criterion to evaluate language performance. Arnold J. further developed the "affective filter hypothesis" in the process of practical teaching. He believes that excessive negative emotions will make it difficult for language learners to reach the optimal state of learning. What learners should do is to stimulate their own positive emotional factors, such as self-esteem, motivation or empathy.

1.2.2 Domestic Research Dynamic

Wen Qiufang and Wang Haixiao studied the relationship between learners' emotional factors and college English test scores, and came to the conclusion that the three factors of "affective filter hypothesis" play a positive or negative role on scores^[4]. A higher level of learning confidence and lower anxiety level can promote language acquisition. Wang Chuming analyzed that the need for English learning comes from self-knowledge and three emotional factors in the "affective filter hypothesis", among which emotional factors have a greater influence on second language acquisition^[5]. Li Xianjin believes that the "affective filter hypothesis" plays an imperative part in the practice of second language teaching^[6].

To sum up, the study of English listening teaching has attracted attention of many scholars at home and abroad. However, the application of "affective filter hypothesis" in English listening teaching is very limited. Therefore, based on the previous studies of scholars, this paper attempts to explore the role of "affective filter hypothesis" in middle school English listening teaching, in the hope that the conclusions will provide some enlightenment for middle school listening teaching.

2. Krashen's affective filtering hypothesis

2.1 Affective Filtering Hypothesis

In the early 1980s, an American linguist named Krashen, proposed the "Monitor Model" which has a far-reaching influence on the development of second language acquisition. Krashen put forward five hypotheses on Second Language Acquisition: Acquisition-Learning Distinction Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen proposed and demonstrated that affective factors play a vital role in the whole process of second language acquisition: learners' emotional status directly made a profound impact on the input of acquisition and the cultivation of language acquisition ability. During the acquisition process, the learner will experience different degrees of affective filtering while receiving the language input. According to him, there are three main factors that can affect and change the emotional filtering of learners: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety.

2.2 Related Emotional Factors in the Affective Filter Hypothesis

2.2.1 Motivation

In foreign language learning, motivation is a kind of intrinsic intension that directly causes learning activities. As is well-known, learning motivation could be classified into positive motivation and negative motivation. Motivation is the goal and outcome of language acquisition. Learners have the positive motivation, which is the key to successful language acquisition. Motivation, defined by Harmer, is the inner motivation that stimulates individual to pursue targets^[7]. Gardner and Lambert divided the motivation into instrumental motivation and comprehensive motivation^[8]. With the correct learning motivation can enhance the confidence and overcome difficulties actively and complete the task of communication effectively.

2.2.2 Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is the learner's subjective affirmation of his ability and value. Krashen pointed out that learning confidence is particularly important in second language acquisition. In other words, confident learners can recognize their own language level and advantages, and are good at using their language skills to complete tasks. Thus they usually

achieve satisfactory results. On the contrary, learners with low self-confidence tend to be discouraged and not good at dealing with difficulties, which often leads to fear of difficulties and affects the improvement of learners' language level.

2.2.3 Anxiety

In psychology, anxiety, an emotional nervous state, is caused by frustrated self-esteem or the feeling of failure and guilt from the threat of unreachable goals and unconquerable difficulties. Listening anxiety refers to the fear of the receiver for the wrong understanding and comprehension of information, people failed to process information correctly in time and adapt to the conveyed information psychologically. Krashen pointed out that anxiety occurred in second language teaching class usually relates to their learning failures, such as making mistakes, losing face and fear criticism.

3. The Current Status of English Listening in Junior High School

3.1 The Students' Learning

3.1.1 Low Learning Motivation, Interest and Low Self-Confidence

First of all, the root reason of some students' poor English listening ability lies in the lack of learning motivation and inability to overcome difficulties, maintain attention and take the initiative in learning. Secondly, due to the unitary evaluation method, it is often presented with scores, which leads to the lack of students' confidence. Students have doubts about their ability, and as a result they become less and less interested in listening, not to mention the development of their listening skills.

3.1.2 Lack of Stability in Psychological Quality

In English listening tests, there are many students who often have a nervous mood, and the listening materials provided relative to the normal teaching speed is much faster. In this case, students are prone to anxiety, panic, which will eventually lead to the inability to concentrate in class and affect their listening level.

3.1.3 Lack of Basic Knowledge and Skills

For those who have a relatively weak foundation in English learning, especially in English listening, they always lack of necessary phonetic knowledge and rounded pronunciatonal rule, which will seriously affect students' understanding and output of the material. Thus, these negative factors will make students lose interest in the listening training. What's worse, they detest or even do not participate in the listening practice.

3.2 The Teachers' Teaching

3.2.1 Outmoded Teaching Pattern and Simplex Teaching Method.

Many English teachers in junior high school simply use the practice method about "listen to the tape and answer the question". Students with good foundation may catch some sporadic words or phrases during the training, while students with poor foundation will get nothing. To utilize humdrum, mechanical, rigid and step-by-step teaching method and make no account of the teaching and guidance of learning methods, students can only fulfill the learning program in the environment of rote learning.

3.2.2 Inappropriate Classroom Atmosphere

In the usual class, especially for listening class, teachers tend to choose quiet and serious style for various reasons which will lead to an oppressive environment and a "heavy" classroom atmosphere. Listening training has become a kind of classroom process with no actual utility. Under such an atmosphere, students' initiative and enthusiasm are restrained, which makes the listening training become mechanical and boring.

4. Implications in Combining Affective Filtering Hypothesis to the Listening Teaching

4.1 Pre-Listening

4.1.1 Prepare Interesting Materials

Psychologists consider that the listening comprehension efficiency is influenced by psychological factors. People will be more concentrated when listening to the materials that they are interested in. From the development process of psychology, the first step is to take notice, then to accept, finally to understand, otherwise they will too bored to keep accomplishing the rest of the steps. So, what teachers should do first is to provide some interesting and proper listening materials which can catch learners' attention.

4.1.2 Prepare Background Information

Before listening practice, the teacher had better to provide learners with relevant and additional background or with some necessary supplementary information which would help them to predict what the text will be and gain a greater understanding of the context. In addition, the teacher could encourage students to carry out self-directed learning, to collect relevant material by themselves actively and to read extensively. At the end, inviting students to show their achievements or having a discussion is expedient to mobilize the students' initiatives greatly.

4.2 While-Listening

4.2.1 Strengthen Students' Confidence and Reducing the Anxiety

Affective filter hypothesis of Krashen indicated that lower anxiety is more favorable to second language acquisition, in other words, students with stronger motivation and self-confidence can obtain more acquisition. Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated that anxiety level of learners' is inversely proportional to their language acquisition. Therefore, teachers should fully recognize the influence of affective factors on listening input. During the listening teaching, sincere help to the students with poor listening foundation is needed instead of mock and sarcasm. It is necessary to recognize their strengths and encourage them. That is to say, teachers ought to boost learners' self-confidence and help them set up the right learning motivation.

4.2.2 Create a Harmonious and Relaxed Teaching Environment.

American educator John Rosier said: "Effective and successful teaching hinges on teacher-student relationship of mutual understanding and mutual trust, depends on a harmonious and healthy classroom atmosphere." To give praise when the student answers the question is a good way to relieve the student's study pressure. Even if they give the wrong answers, teachers shall also pay attention to their teaching art, so that students have a pleasant and positive emotional experience, and hold an energetic and optimistic spirit, thus increasing their confidence in learning English.

4.3 Post-Listening

4.3.1 Combine Education with Recreation

Listening practice is not limited to the classroom, and students should practice constantly to achieve progress. However, repeated and sustained practice will make students reject and resist listening. When assigning exercises after class, teachers can combine practice with recreation. For example, let the students listen to a suitable English song or watch an English movie after school. Several important studies have mentioned the significance of English teaching through music and songs.

4.3.2 Enrich After-Class Activities

The syllabus states: "Extracurricular activities are auxiliary means of teaching, which are conducive to stimulating interest, expanding knowledge, broadening horizons, and developing intelligence and personality. Therefore, some extra-curricular activities can be held according to students' English proficiency, such as setting up English clubs or English radio stations, carrying out English reading competitions, English singing competitions and so on.

5. Conclusion

Krashen's "affective filter hypothesis" manifested the influence of affective factors on language input. And it has important enlightenment on English listening teaching. To enhance the quality of listening teaching, teachers must take

full advantage of the role of affective factors in listening teaching. In the class, teachers should not only offer enough comprehensible input to learners, but also make an effort to build an environment of lower affective filter. The teacher needs to induce students' learning motivation, strengthen their self-confidence, effectively reduce the affective filter and the classroom listening anxiety, so as to help students to maximally acquire language by listening class and improve their capability in language application. Finally, because of time constraint and limitations of all kinds of objective conditions, the author has not been able to apply this research into practice, and there has been no empirical research. If someone studies on this topic again, it is expected that it can be further verified in practical teaching.

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