

The Use of Affective Strategies in English Teaching

Zou Yiting

School of English Studies, Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, China

Keywords: Affective strategies, foreign language teaching, teaching skills

Abstract: This paper delves into the pivotal role of affective strategies in English language teaching, with a concentration on the critical affective elements: motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy. It builds upon Krashen's "Affective Filter Hypothesis", which underscores the impact of affective elements on the language acquisition process. Numerous researchers have studied affective elements, about their effects and the interaction between them. Drawing from these studies, this article pays attention to motivation, anxiety and self-confidence, providing explanations and influence they have on foreign language learning. Moreover, the article emphasizes the responsibility of teachers in foreign language teaching. Teachers are suggested to apply affective strategies to better support their students, and the strategies are mainly about arousing students' motivation, reducing their anxiety and increasing their self-efficacy. Ultimately, the integration of these affective strategies should be used as it is crucial for fostering a positive learning atmosphere for students and improving their language learning outcomes.

1. Introduction

The term "affective" refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations and values^[1]. Affective factors have great impact on language learning. People have long been concerned about the impact of affective factors on language acquisition.

The idea of "affective filtering" was first introduced by Dttlay and Burr in 1977. Based on this foundation, Krashen^[2] further developed it into the "Affective Filter Hypothesis", positing that "affective filtering is a psychological barrier that prevents language acquirers from fully absorbing the comprehensible input they receive." According to Krashen, factors such as motivation, anxiety, self-confidence and empathy would affect language learning. When learners have a strong interest in learning a second language and are confident in their ability to master it, their sense of learning anxiety will decrease, making the process of learning smoother; when learners have low motivation and strong anxiety and are lack of confidence, the language cannot be absorbed and digested by the learners, thus affecting the effectiveness of language input.

In this article, we take English as the target language in foreign language learning. First, English is a compulsory language in primary and secondary school in China so that it has a wide range of students. In addition, students cannot choose their English teacher, which emphasizes teachers' responsibility in teaching such as motivating.

2. Affective elements in language learning

According to H. Douglas Brown ^[3], the affective domain is impossible to describe within definable limits. Affective elements are innumerable, including motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy, empathy, attitude, risk taking, culture shock, and tolerance of ambiguity. In this article, we focus on the first three elements.

2.1 Motivation

The defining of motivation includes students' choice, effort and persistence in second language learning ^[4]. Studies have categorized motivation into different types, such as intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation; integrative motivation and instrumental motivation; and distant motivation and proximal motivation.

Studies have shown that motivation is not only important in stimulating students' learning activities but also crucial in determining how much knowledge students acquire from activities and received information. Students with learning motivation engage in more advanced cognitive activities, which in turn allows them to learn and remember more content ^[5]. In addition, the interaction between motivation and other factors has an impact on language learning. Gardner and his associates have put forward socio-educational model, figuring out how positive attitudes towards the language and its speakers will affect students' motivation ^[6]. Dörnyei and his colleagues have proposed L2 Motivational Self System, investigating how students' ideal L2 self contributes to their learning ^[7]. While in Katalin and Kata's study, they have researched how motivation affect the learning process, finding out that students' motivated learning behavior will enhance their learning experiences ^[1].

2.2 Anxiety

Anxiety is "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" ^[8]. In foreign language learning, it is of certain language specificity. Horwitz has proposed the concept of "foreign language classroom anxiety" ^[9], which are the complex self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to foreign language learning. Anxiety is divided into facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety, the former has positive effect on language learning while the latter has negative effect on it.

Lots of studies have researched the influence brought from anxiety. Horwitz ^[10] has found that anxiety may erode learners' self-confidence and self-efficacy, leading them to be skeptical of their language abilities. Schumann, J. H. ^[11] has put forward that Anxiety may affect learners' adaptation to the target language culture because they may avoid interacting with members of the target language community for fear of making mistakes. Dörnyei ^[12] has proposed that long-time anxiety may reduce learners' motivation, especially if they feel they are unable to achieve the desired learning goals. MacIntyre, P. D., & Gregersen, T. ^[13] have found that in social situations, anxiety may lead to learners' fear of making mistakes and being judged, thus affecting their social interactions.

2.3 Self-efficacy

Albert Bandura defined self-efficacy as a person's belief in his or her capability to successfully perform a particular task ^[14]. Later, the concept of "self-efficacy" was replaced by "self-confidence", which is a similar social concept. It has both direct and indirect effect on language learning. As for direct effects, learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to have intrinsic motivation for language learning, more likely to adopt effective learning strategies such as metacognitive strategies to enhance language learning efficiency, more willing to accept challenging language learning tasks, and often

perform better in language tests and communication. As for indirect effects, learners with high self-efficacy tend to have lower levels of anxiety, which helps them process language input more effectively; they are more likely to persevere in the face of difficulties, which can indirectly improve language learning outcomes; they are more likely to actively accept and use feedback to improve their language skills, and this positive feedback loop can indirectly enhance language learning outcomes.

Tremblay and Gardner ^[15] have introduced an inverse relationship between language anxiety and self-efficacy, claiming that the former has a negative influence on the latter. Fred Pajares ^[16] in his research has emphasized the role of self-efficacy in academic achievement and applies it to second language learning. His studies indicate that language learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals, persist longer in the face of difficulties, and achieve better results in language learning.

3. Strategies used in teaching

Teachers play a vital role in helping language learners adjust affective factors through certain strategies. The strategies talked about below are corresponding to the affective elements.

3.1 Arousing and using students' motivation

To some extent, teachers' aim in class is to make students understand that the knowledge is valuable and also worth learning, so that they are supposed to consciously take advantage of effective strategies to motivate students.

First, teachers ought to create a supportive atmosphere for students, both materially and spiritually. In terms of material support, plenty resources and opportunities are required ^[17]. Except regular teaching materials such as textbooks, teachers are suggested to offer supplementary materials, such like additional reading materials and references of grammar, to satisfy students' curiosity to explore. Moreover, teachers had better set long-term and short-term goals and show them to students to facilitate students to track their learning process. This will help students incorporate new knowledge into their existing knowledge structure, mobilize cognitive factors in learning, enhance learning motivation with achieved learning achievements, maintain their desire to learn, and transform their potential motivation to learn into willingness to learn, thus maximizing their motivation. In terms of spiritual support, patience and encouragement are needed.

In addition, according to Yerkes-Dodson Law, there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between motivation levels and task performance. This means that too low or too high a level of motivation is detrimental to task performance, while moderate levels of motivation lead to optimal performance. Therefore, teachers should endeavor to create an environment where students' motivation levels are maintained at a moderate state, which means neither allowing students to feel too relaxed nor letting them become overly tense or anxious. For instance, teachers can help students set specific and achievable goals that are challenging yet not likely to cause excessive anxiety.

3.2 Reduce students' anxiety and increase their self-efficacy

Due to the duality of anxiety, teachers are required to make full use to facilitating and help students reduce debilitating anxiety. Teachers are suggested to set proper goals for students which they could achieve through effort. Setting goals that are too high for students would put them into excessive anxiety, making them frustrated. Besides, aware of students' excessive anxiety, teachers are responsible for helping them reduce it. Since much of students' anxiety comes from a lack of self-confidence in learning and unfriendly external evaluations, teachers should put themselves in the students' shoes to realize their emotional feelings and psychological needs and understand their

psychological characteristics in order to take appropriate measures to cope with these psychological changes. Good emotions can motivate students to learn and reduce their anxiety; the reduction of anxiety can help move the obstacles in learning and provide effective language input; at the same time, the sense of achievement brought about by effective language input can help students regain self-efficacy.

For low anxiety extroverted students, teachers should encourage them to speak more. Extraverts like to socialize and have a strong sense of curiosity, which makes them have a tendency to give full play to their strong communicative potential in their personality traits when they are learning a language with strong communicative functions; while for introverted students teachers should create a multi-dimensional language environment, organize interesting group discussions to drive the students to participate in classroom activities, increase the motivation of the students to express themselves in the classroom orally and reduce their anxiety.

Besides, proper feedback is necessary. Students' self-efficacy is significantly positively correlated with the amount of feedback language from teachers^[18]. Thus, teachers should continuously improve their feedback methods and flexibly use various types of feedback. Different types of feedback language have different functions, and teachers should enhance their understanding of each type of feedback language to make their feedback diversified and appropriate, avoiding the overuse of a certain type of feedback in the classroom. For instance, after evaluating a student's answer, teachers can appropriately extend it, supplement the content, and try to use a mixed-type feedback language as much as possible. At the same time, when providing feedback, teachers should pay attention to guiding students to produce more language output. Surveys have found that teachers occupy most of the speaking opportunities, with students having relatively less. Therefore, teachers must pay attention to reasonably balancing the speaking time between teachers and students in the classroom. Upon receiving positive feedback, students' motivation and confidence will increase and in turn they will keep learning, forming a virtuous cycle.

In addition, Krashen believes that learners' mistakes in language acquisition are "part of the process of language acquisition". Chinese students have fewer opportunities to speak English, so it is inevitable for them to make mistakes in their oral expressions. For those students who have high anxiety and are introverted, if the teacher corrects their mistakes in front of them, the students' self-confidence will be undermined, which will lead to anxiety and low self-esteem, and eventually they will not dare to speak again^[19]. Therefore, teachers should show moderate tolerance for students' mistakes, they should not rush to correct students' mistakes. Teachers can then point out the errors at the end of the discussion so that teachers and students will have sufficient time to categorize, analyze and reflect on the more typical errors. For students with low anxiety and extroversion, we advocate that students and teachers work together to correct errors, or that students carry out self-correction. This not only takes into account the students' fear of making a fool of themselves, but also helps them to develop the ability to self-discover errors in verbal expression, and at the same time reduces their anxiety.

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