

Using Communicative language Teaching Method to Reduce High School Students' Anxiety about Speaking English

Qianqian Teng

China West Normal University, Nanchong, 637000, China

Abstract: This paper explores the use of communicative language teaching methods to address high school students' anxiety when speaking English. It emphasizes the significance of creating a supportive and interactive language learning environment to alleviate anxiety and enhance students' English speaking skills. The research aims to contribute to the existing literature by investigating the effectiveness of communicative language teaching methods in reducing anxiety and fostering students' confidence in speaking English.

Keywords: Communicative language teaching method, High school students, Oral anxiety, Spoken English.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Communicative teaching method emerged in the early 1970s. Subsequently, it gradually gained popularity and recognition among English teachers, and played a significant role in English teaching. It has also been widely applied and played an important role in oral English teaching in high schools. The communicative teaching method is an approach based on language functions, focusing on developing students' communicative abilities. Its aim is to enhance language learners' communicative competence, gradually developing their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is undeniable that the communicative teaching method has its unique advantages in improving students' language proficiency. Therefore, in the early 1980s, Chinese scholars introduced the communicative teaching method to China. (International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation, 2023, 6(1)).

In today's globalized world, English proficiency has become increasingly important for high school students. However, many students experience anxiety when it comes to speaking English. This anxiety can significantly hinder their ability to communicate effectively and impede their language learning progress. This research paper aims to explore how the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method can effectively reduce high school students' anxiety about speaking English. By creating a supportive and interactive learning environment, CLT can help students develop the necessary skills and confidence to engage in oral communication.

1.2. Objective

The objective of this research is to explore the use of communicative methods as an effective approach to reduce high school students' anxiety about speaking English. By creating a supportive and interactive language learning environment, the aim is to enhance students' confidence, promote active participation, and improve their overall English speaking skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The definition of spoken language

"Spoken language" refers to the ability and skill to communicate using oral language. Spoken language is mainly used in daily communication, expressing emotions, solving problems, and achieving agreements.

The elements of spoken language include pronunciation, intonation, pace, and tone, among other aspects. By applying these elements properly, people can communicate fluently and accurately in spoken language. In addition, the expression style of spoken language also needs to be adjusted according to different occasions and situations, in order to better convey information and intentions.

In today's social life and career development, good spoken language ability has become an essential quality, which can help people communicate, establish trust relationships, expand their networks, and gain broader opportunities. Therefore, we should strive to develop our own spoken language abilities, maintain an open mindset, actively communicate with others, and continuously improve our spoken language level.

2.2. The definition of English speaking anxiety

English speaking anxiety refers to the fear, apprehension, and discomfort experienced by students when they need to speak in English. It can manifest in various ways, including avoidance of speaking tasks, physical symptoms, and reduced willingness to participate in classroom activities. Several studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of anxiety on language learning outcomes. (Cyberpsychology, behavior and social networking, 2023, 26(2)).

2.3. The definition of CLT

CLT is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes authentic communication and meaningful language use. It moves away from traditional grammar-focused instruction and encourages students to actively participate in real-life communication tasks. CLT emphasizes the integration of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in a communicative and interactive classroom environment.

(Journal of Educational Research and Politics,2023,5(2).

2.4. Communicative methods in language teaching

Communicative Method is a language teaching method that emphasizes students learning and using language through practical communication. The core concept of communicative approach is to aim for real communication, focusing on learners using language to communicate in real contexts. It emphasizes the functional and communicative competence of language rather than just memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary.

Communicative language teaching emphasizes the use of authentic and meaningful communication in the language classroom. It encourages students to engage in real-life language tasks, such as role-plays, group discussions, and problem-solving activities. Previous research has demonstrated that communicative methods can help reduce anxiety by providing a supportive and interactive learning environment that focuses on meaningful language use rather than accuracy alone.(Cogent Education ,2022,9(1)).

3. Problems in the Teaching of Spoken English in High School

The needs of the development of the times, English communication skills have become increasingly important in foreign language teaching. Currently, the cultivation of English communicative ability in university courses is not given enough emphasis, with only a focus on language knowledge and grammar in textbooks. Traditional teaching methods cannot meet the requirements for the development of English communicative ability, especially in terms of pronunciation and intonation. In recent years, although there have been some developments in English oral teaching, there are still many problems. The traditional teaching model, which relies heavily on teacher lectures and student listening, is still widely used in English oral teaching classrooms. As a result, the expected goals of English oral teaching cannot be achieved.

In general, there are the following problems in high school English classrooms at present.

3.1. Insufficient speaking practice

Classroom activities predominantly focus on reading and writing, with limited time allocated for speaking practice. Students may only get a few minutes per class to speak in English, which is often not enough to build fluency and confidence. For example, students may only engage in short role-plays or answer simple questions without delving into extended conversations or debates.

3.2. Lack of authentic communication

Many high school English oral classes focus on scripted dialogues or repetitive exercises, which do not reflect real-life communication situations. Students may struggle to transfer their language skills to authentic contexts, such as expressing opinions, engaging in debates, or participating in discussions on current events. This lack of authenticity can hinder their ability to communicate effectively in real-world settings.

3.3. Fear of making mistakes

Students are often afraid of making errors while speaking English, leading to self-consciousness and reduced

participation. This fear can be reinforced by a classroom culture that focuses excessively on accuracy. For example, students may hesitate to express their ideas or ask questions for fear of being corrected or judged by their peers or the teacher.

3.4. Teacher-centered instruction

Traditional teaching approaches in high school English oral classes often rely on teacher-led activities where the teacher dominates the conversation. This limits students' speaking time and inhibits their ability to develop independent communication skills. For instance, the teacher may spend most of the class time giving instructions, explaining grammar rules, or providing model answers, leaving little room for students' active participation.

3.5. Inadequate speaking assessment

Oral assessments in high school English classes often prioritize memorization and repetition of pre-determined answers. For example, students may be evaluated based on their ability to recite prepared speeches or deliver rehearsed presentations. This assessment method does not reflect students' real communicative competence and fails to measure their ability to engage in spontaneous, meaningful conversations.

3.6. Limited exposure to authentic English input

Some high school English courses lack authentic English materials, such as native speaker conversations, authentic videos, or culturally relevant resources. As a result, students may struggle to understand natural speech patterns, idiomatic expressions, or different accents. For example, students may be unfamiliar with colloquial language and informal expressions commonly used in everyday English conversations.

Addressing these issues requires incorporating communicative activities that encourage students to engage in authentic conversations, express their opinions, and develop critical thinking skills. Creating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning is crucial. Additionally, integrating authentic materials, such as videos, podcasts, and real-world tasks, can expose students to various English language contexts and enhance their speaking skills.

4. The Principles of Using Communicative Teaching Methods

Teaching communicative competence requires teachers to make adequate preparations, but teachers should not blindly engage in activities for the sake of interaction, which can lead to confusion and a significant decline in teaching effectiveness. When using communicative methods, teachers should follow the following principles.

4.1. Authentic Communication

Encourage students to engage in meaningful and realistic communication. Provide opportunities for students to interact and use the language in genuine situations, such as through role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving activities. This helps students develop their fluency and confidence in using the language naturally.

4.2. Student-Centered Approach

Shift the focus from the teacher to the students. Create a student-centered classroom environment where students actively participate in the learning process. Foster collaboration and peer interaction to promote language practice and learning. Give students autonomy in making decisions about their learning and provide choices for tasks and activities that cater to their interests and needs.

4.3. Task-Based Learning

Design tasks and activities that require students to use the language to accomplish specific goals or tasks. These tasks should be meaningful, purposeful, and related to real-life situations. By engaging in tasks, students can develop their language skills while focusing on communication and problem-solving. Encourage students to work collaboratively, negotiate meaning, and reflect on their performance.

4.4. Error Correction

Focus on meaning rather than on constant correction of errors. Encourage students to take risks and communicate freely without excessive fear of making mistakes. Provide feedback that balances error correction with positive reinforcement, helping students learn from their mistakes while maintaining their motivation. Encourage self-correction and peer-correction as part of the learning process.

By following these principles, we can create a communicative and learner-centered classroom environment that promotes active engagement, meaningful communication, and language development among your students.

5. Measures to Reduce Oral English Anxiety

Reducing oral English anxiety among high school students can be effectively addressed through communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies. CLT focuses on providing learners with meaningful and authentic opportunities to practice and use the target language in real-life contexts. Here are some measures you can implement to reduce oral English anxiety using CLT:

5.1. Create a supportive classroom environment

Establish a positive and inclusive atmosphere where students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. Encourage open communication, active participation, and respect among students. Emphasize that making mistakes is a natural part of learning and provide a nurturing environment that promotes risk-taking.

5.2. Use pair and group activities

Incorporate activities that require students to work in pairs or small groups. For example, you can assign tasks like role plays, information gap activities, or problem-solving tasks that encourage students to interact and communicate with their peers. Working in smaller groups reduces the pressure of speaking in front of the whole class and allows students to gain confidence through practice and collaboration.

5.3. Provide ample opportunities for speaking practice

Design activities that focus on real-life communication and enable students to practice their oral English skills. Encourage

discussions on various topics, debates, presentations, and simulated conversations. These activities should be engaging and meaningful, encouraging students to express their thoughts and opinions in English.

5.4. Gradually increase the complexity of tasks

Start with simpler tasks and gradually introduce more challenging activities as students become more comfortable with oral English. This gradual progression helps build their confidence and language skills over time. Begin with short and structured speaking activities, and then move on to longer and more open-ended tasks that require extended communication.

5.5. Offer constructive feedback

Provide constructive feedback that focuses on both strengths and areas for improvement. When providing feedback, highlight specific aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary usage, and fluency. Use a positive and encouraging tone, emphasizing the progress students have made while providing guidance on how they can further enhance their oral English skills.

5.6. Integrate multimedia resources

Incorporate a variety of multimedia resources to expose students to different accents, speaking styles, and contexts. Use audio recordings, videos, podcasts, and online platforms that provide authentic examples of spoken English. This exposure helps students develop listening skills, expand their vocabulary, and become more comfortable with different English language patterns.

5.7. Role model and scaffold

As the teacher, model effective speaking strategies and demonstrate fluent and accurate English. Use appropriate intonation, stress, and body language when speaking. Provide scaffolding support by offering sentence frames, vocabulary lists, or conversation starters to assist students in expressing themselves more confidently. Gradually reduce the amount of scaffolding as students become more proficient.

5.8. Encourage self-directed learning

Foster independent learning by recommending resources that students can utilize outside the classroom. Suggest English language learning apps, websites, podcasts, or books that offer additional speaking practice and opportunities for students to engage with the language autonomously. Encourage students to seek out conversations with native English speakers, either in person or through online language exchange platforms.

5.9. Celebrate achievements

Recognize and celebrate students' progress and achievements in oral English. Acknowledge their efforts, improvement, and contributions to class discussions. Use positive reinforcement, such as praise, certificates, or small rewards, to boost their confidence and motivation. Encouraging a growth mindset and celebrating milestones can inspire students to continue their journey toward becoming more proficient English speakers.

In a nutshell, reducing oral anxiety takes time and patience. By implementing these measures consistently and creating a supportive environment, high school students can gradually overcome their English oral anxiety and develop confidence

in their speaking abilities.

6. Conclusion

In summary, with the development of society, the importance of English oral skills is increasingly evident. Therefore, in high school English spoken language practice teaching, teachers should implement the purpose of communicative approach, focusing on students, cultivating their communicative competence and creative use of language. Teachers should select authentic and natural language materials according to learners' actual needs, rather than processed "textbook language". It is necessary to have a certain level of tolerance for language errors that students make during the learning process, and do not correct errors that do not affect communication.

In addition, teachers should encourage learners to take the initiative and be active in verbal communication activities. Creating scenarios that resemble real communication and using group activities more often in teaching can cultivate the ability to use language for communication through numerous verbal communication activities, and integrate classroom communication activities with communication in daily life. Integrating the training of individual skills with comprehensive skills training, with a focus on comprehensive training, ultimately aims to achieve the goal of using language in communication.

References

- [1] Ghafar N Z, Sawalmeh H M, Mohamedamin A A. Impact of Communicative Language Teaching Method on Students' Speaking and Listening Skills: A Review Article[J]. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2023, 6(1).
- [2] Ying Y. A Brief Analysis on the Application of Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching in English Reading Teaching[J]. *Journal of Educational Research and Policies*, 2023, 5(2).
- [3] Matteo G, Milena S, Margherita P, et al. The Effect of Previous Exposure on Virtual Reality Induced Public Speaking Anxiety: A Physiological and Behavioral Study.[J]. *Cyberpsychology, behavior and social networking*, 2023, 26(2).
- [4] Habtamu A, Mendida B. A case study of EFL teachers' practice of teaching speaking skills vis-à-vis the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)[J]. *Cogent Education*, 2022, 9(1).
- [5] N S, V V. The Importance and Strategy of Communicative Language Teaching Method in the Process of English Teaching[J]. *Journal of Educational Research and Policies*, 2022, 4(7).
- [6] (Jay) R V, Christopher W. Examining a continuum of FL speaking anxiety over time in an EFL classroom in Japan[J]. *System*, 2022, 110.
- [7] Hannah P, Polly W, Cathy C. Optimising exposure for adolescents with public speaking anxiety: Affect labelling or positive coping statements?[J]. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 2022, 148.
- [8] Hui P, Fang X, Tribhuwan K, et al. Massive Open Online Course Versus Flipped Instruction: Impacts on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety, Foreign Language Learning Motivation, and Learning Attitude [J]. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2022, 13.
- [9] A. J F. Communicative Language Teaching in Action: Putting Principles to Work by Klaus Brandl (review)[J]. *The French Review*, 2021, 85(2).
- [10] Ahmadali M R Q. Effective ways of communicative language teaching [J]. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 2021, 11(3).
- [11] Xu X. An Analysis of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach: Difficulties and Implementations[J]. *Curriculum and Teaching Methodology*, 2021, 4(4).
- [12] Zsuzsanna B. Motivation, self-efficacy beliefs, and speaking anxiety in language MOOCs[J]. *ReCALL*, 2021, 33(2).
- [13] Ya-Yu H C. Communicative language teaching and English as a foreign language undergraduates' communicative competence in Tourism English[J]. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 2020, 27.
- [14] Jason A. 'Buying in' to communicative language teaching: the impact of 'initial' certification courses on the classroom practices of experienced teachers of English[J]. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 2020, 14(1).
- [15] Mohammad A. Exploring the Role of Translation in Communicative Language Teaching or the Communicative Approach[J]. *SAGE Open*, 2020, 10(2).
- [16] Teachers' beliefs and practices towards communicative language teaching in the expanding circle[J]. *Revista signos*, 2019, 52(100).