

A Study on Mobile APP in Students' English Speaking Learning in Chinese Middle School

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Abstract: Oral English learning is an important part of English learning. However, there are still many students who are full of anxiety, tension and other negative emotions in oral English learning in China. In order to study the effect of "Oral 100" app on relieving junior high school students' oral English anxiety, 150 junior high school students from a Chinese middle school were surveyed. The study found that students in this school have learning anxiety in their oral English class. "Oral 100" app affects and alleviates junior middle school students' oral learning anxiety in the following three aspects: learning progress anxiety in oral class, speech anxiety in oral class and oral evaluation anxiety.

Key words-- "Oral 100" app; students; English speaking; anxiety; Chinese students

I. INTRODUCTION

Fluent oral English is the guarantee of communication. Oral English has become one of the standards for English learners to measure their abilities.

The emotional attitude is an important assessment standard of the new English curriculum standard in China. Numerous studies have shown that emotional factors are involved. It plays an important role in the process of learning a foreign language while it is very common that the phenomenon of anxiety appears in the process of learning a foreign language (e.g.[1]). Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to further study how to relieve junior high school students' oral learning anxiety from the perspective of emotional teaching.

In recent years, the Internet has developed rapidly and penetrated into all aspects of people's life. In the context of the development of educational informatization, mobile phones have gradually become an important tool for students to learn, and educational apps have emerged. These apps provide a new learning platform and communication space for students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Research on Anxiety in Oral English Learning

Horwitz formally put forward the concept of foreign language anxiety in 1986 and defined it as "the synthesis of perception, belief and other related emotional states occurring in the classroom language learning environment"(e.g.[2]). For learners, anxiety is an important change among many emotional factors. For students, learning anxiety has become an unavoidable problem in the learning process (e.g.[3]).

With the in-depth study of foreign language learning anxiety, scholars at home and abroad have put forward the causes of anxiety. Zhang in the Study on the Relationship between the Internal Factors of Anxiety and Oral English Learners pointed out that student's inherent subjective factor is the main cause of the student spoken language learning anxiety (e.g.[4]). Different from Zhang, Chen, a professor at Nanjing University, divided anxiety into two types: personality type and environment type.

B. Research on Alleviating Oral Anxiety in Foreign Languages

Over the years, different researchers have come to different conclusions on how to relieve students' foreign language learning anxiety from different angles. Creating a Low-anxiety Environment: What does Language Anxiety Research Suggest? (e.g.[5])analyzed from the perspective of teachers, proposed some feasible methods on how to relieve students' anxiety in oral learning. Xiong on How to Ease the Students Oral English Learning Anxiety pointed out her own opinion that the teacher in oral English class need to give students more time and opportunity to publish their views more importantly, the teacher should give students more verbal praise and encouragement in the learning process for students to strengthen students' confidence in order to reduce the students' learning anxiety (e.g.[6]).

C. Research on Oral APP to Relieve Students' Anxiety

In the context of the development of educational informatization, educational apps have emerged, and mobile phone has gradually become an important tool for students to learn. Cai in the English Learning Software "English Fun Dubbed" the Feasibility Study of Junior Middle School English Teaching pointed out that the phone app combined with junior high school oral English teaching has distinct advantages. Study of English education app in spoken language, Shi in the Application of Education APP to Improve Students Ability of Oral English Study pointed that educational applications make teacher pay more attention to the impact of emotional factors to the students(e.g.[7]). In terms of app to reduce students' oral English learning anxiety, Lian's Empirical Analysis of APP's Relieving Effect on Oral English Anxiety pointed out the app may ease oral English classroom anxiety (e.g. [8]).

At present, there are few researches on educational app at home and abroad, mainly targeting at adults or college students, while there are few researches on junior high school students (e.g. [9]). In addition, the app content studied is less related to textbooks, and more supplementary to extracurricular content.

Due to the influence of diversified factors, English phonetics teaching in middle schools is difficult to a certain extent. However, the emergence and application of “Oral 100” app has promoted the improvement of English listening and speaking ability of middle school students to a certain extent by adopting modern training methods and intelligent technology. Therefore, this platform can achieve a breakthrough in English pronunciation teaching in primary and middle schools and meet the practical needs of the development of English teaching in primary and middle schools (e.g. [10]). Under this teaching mode, students will have less pressure to learn oral English.

The novelty of this study is as follows: 1. The “Oral 100” app in this study is closely related to the texts that junior high school students are learning, which can further study whether the educational app can relieve students’ classroom anxiety. 2. The app has the function of online oral test. Huangshi No. 16 Middle School intends to take the online oral test of “Oral 100” as one of the evaluation criteria for students’ oral test. This study can explore the practical significance of the combination of online app and offline teaching and provide reference for more schools and districts.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Research participants

A total of 150 students were selected from 1300 grade one students in a Chinese middle school by simple random method.

B. Research Instruments and Interview

Horwitz’s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was adapted in this study. Section one has 33 items to explore students’ classroom anxiety. Section two has 18 items to investigate the practicability of “Oral 100” app.

The anxiety in this study, as a kind of emotion, cannot be accurately quantified. In order to ensure the credibility of this study and better understand the current situation of junior high school students’ oral learning anxiety, this study also adopts the interview method to interview the English teachers and 50 students from No. 16 Middle School. The interview method in this study mainly serves as a reference for the author to study the credibility of “Oral 100” app to relieve anxiety in oral English learning.

C. Research Procedure

This study was conducted in the first semester of Grade 7 when students started to use the “Oral 100” app. Teachers would regularly check students’ learning on the “Oral

100” app and give feedback to the class. Before the end of the semester, a questionnaire was given to the students of this school, and 150 questionnaires were distributed. The effective recovery rate is 98.7%.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Statistical Analysis of Oral Anxiety Questionnaire

1) Current Situation of Junior Middle School Students’ Anxiety in Oral English Learning

The questionnaire includes four dimensions: personality anxiety, communication anxiety, examination anxiety and classroom anxiety.

Personality anxiety is mainly reflected in students’ lack of confidence in their oral English and low interest in oral English courses due to their own personality. According to the results of the questionnaire survey, the students in this school did not have any major personality anxiety problems. A sum of 62.16% of the students denied that they had no confidence in the English class and only 10.82% of the students thought they had no confidence in oral English class.

As for the 28th question “I will feel full of confident before English class”, only 9.46% of the students agreed that they had no confidence before the English class. Questions about related dimensions in the questionnaire also show similar options. Most of the students in school think that they have confidence in English learning.

Communicative anxiety refers to the process of communicating with others, students will not be confident in their oral English. In question 14 “I do not feel nervous to speak English with foreigners”, 53 students choose couldn’t agree more, 25 students choose agree and only 36 students choose against and very against.

Question 14: I do not feel nervous to speak English with foreigners-	
Options-	Percentages-
strongly agreed-	35.9%
agreed-	16.67%
neither agreed nor disagreed-	23.08%
disagreed-	12.82%
strongly disagreed-	11.54%

At the same time, “I would feel nervous if I did not understand the teacher’s words”, only less than 20% of the students agreed or couldn’t agree more, while 30% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed which reflects that in the process of communicating with others, the students in this school did not produce too much communication anxiety.

Fear of oral test and will have the negative physical or mental reactions during the test are the main manifestations of test anxiety.

In question 8 of the questionnaire, “I feel relaxed about some quizzes on oral English” more than 62 % of the students

choose strongly agree with and agree with, while less than 15% of the students choose against and very against.

Question 8: I feel relaxed about some quizzes on oral English.	
Options:-	Percentages:-
strongly agreed-	42.21%
agreed-	23.08%
neither agreed nor disagreed-	19.23%
disagreed-	11.54%
strongly disagreed-	3.85%

On question 10, "I'm afraid I can't pass the oral test," more than 57 percent of the students choose disagree or strongly disagree.

The above data shows that students in this school have no resistance or boredom to the oral test. Therefore, in terms of oral anxiety, the problem of exam anxiety is not widespread in this school.

Class anxiety is divided into class progress anxiety, class speech anxiety and class interest. Students with class anxiety will worry that they can't keep up with the progress of the oral class. The fourth question "If I don't understand what the teacher says in English in oral class, I will be afraid", there are more than 20% students chose couldn't agree more with it, 34.62% students chose agree but only fewer than 24% students chose against or very against, it shows that if not keep up with the teacher's progress in oral English class, students will produce fear or anxiety.

Question4: If I don't understand what the teacher says in English in oral class, I will be afraid.	
Options:-	Percentages:-
strongly agreed-	23.04%
agreed-	34.62%
neither agreed nor disagreed-	17.95%
disagreed-	14.1%
strongly disagreed-	10.26%

Question 5 "Even if I had more oral classes, I wouldn't be bothered", more than 41% students chose couldn't agree more or agree with it. Less than 14 % choose against and very against, which also indicates that the number of oral classes will not bring trouble to students' oral anxiety, but if the class progress is too fast, students will have anxiety.

Question17: You often feel that you don't want to go to an oral class.	
Options:-	Percentages:-
strongly agreed-	7.69%
agreed-	5.31%
neither agreed nor disagreed-	8.97%
disagreed-	34.62%
strongly disagreed-	43.59%

The survey results of question 17, in which "You often feel that you don't want to go to an oral class", clearly support this view. This indicates that students are interested in the oral class itself, but if the class progress is too fast, students will

have a sense of tension, which leads to the generation of anxiety.

Question 3, "I tremble when the teacher calls me in oral classes." There are 42 students chose to oppose it while 57 students chose very opposed it. Question 9, "when I am not ready to speak in the oral class, I will feel nervous", more than 52% students choose to agree or strongly agree with it. This shows that the speech itself will not cause students upset and nervous or other bad feelings. However, if you are not fully prepared psychologically and are asked to speak by the teacher, you will feel uneasy.

2) Analysis of the Causes of the Present Situation

The results of the questionnaire survey on oral anxiety show that there are no personality anxiety, communication anxiety and test anxiety in this class. However, there is still anxiety in the oral class. In combination with the students' personality and performance, the reasons are analyzed as follows:

First, the students of this school are optimistic and have high learning enthusiasm. The semester of experimental observation is the first semester when they enter the junior high school. So the students of this school have high enthusiasm for learning new knowledge and strong desire to learn. Under the premise of their optimistic personality, there is no personality anxiety problem.

Second, students of this school have a good learning foundation. The average score of the school is between 100-110 (full score: 120).The online test result and offline oral test do not fall into the category of the English test, so the students of this school do not have obvious test anxiety.

Third, less time and effort are spent on oral English classes than other classes. The teacher's teaching pace is faster. So the double pressure will bring some anxiety to the students in the school. The platform of "Oral 100" app provides students with the choice and way of learning after class. Students' oral English learning is no longer affected by time, place and other factors, and the pressure of learning can be relieved. Therefore, "Oral 100" app to a certain extent alleviates students' anxiety in oral class learning in terms of class speech and class progress.

The above analysis analyzes the reasons why the students in No.16 Middle School have anxiety in oral class learning and other aspects are not obvious.

3) Survey and Analysis of "Oral 100" APP

The humanized intelligent voice of "Oral 100" app can realize the detailed correction of students' voice, and the dialogue with students can ensure a certain degree of natural humanization, which is conducive to solving the problem of listening and speaking training for students. "Oral 100" app supports peer assessment and scoring to achieve interactive learning.

In a word, “Oral 100” app is an oral practice platform that is easy to operate and provides a good platform and resources for teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction.

4) Analysis of questionnaire and interview results

Anxiety could not be quantified, and the oral test did not enter the daily English test of middle school students. In order to make the experiment more credible, the English teacher and ten students of the class were interviewed after the questionnaire survey. The interview results are as follows :

“Oral 100” app can relieve class process anxiety. The interview with ten students reveals that in the traditional class, each student has limited time for oral practice. Interviewed Students said they no longer worry about not keeping up with the teacher in class or not practicing enough.

“Oral 100” app can relieve the anxiety of classroom speech. In terms of class speech anxiety, the interviewed students indicated that they could practice the text content in private and have simulated dialogues. When they speak in class, they will feel easier to master the conversations they have simulated or practiced. So when the teacher points them up to speak or practice a conversation, they feel more relaxed than before.

The evaluation system of “Oral 100”app itself will rate students according to their pronunciation and intonation as well as the degree of completion. Therefore, students can have a clear understanding of their oral English level when they practice after class. Students can find difficult points in conversations and their own mistakes easily on the app. Compared with the teacher's evaluation, the evaluation of app has no personal emotion, so it is more objective. It is easier for students to accept this.

When it comes to real conversation in real life, the students still feel uneasy and nervous. Real conversations between people are far more complex than machines can provide. Through the analysis of the questionnaire and interviews with the interviewees, it can be found that in fact, parents are more supportive than students to use the app to study and practice. But as far as the students themselves are concerned, the practice of the “Oral 100”app takes up extra time apart from doing homework. Even if the teacher assigns a task, it will increase their learning burden, so students are not very interested in learning with the “Oral 100” app and “Oral 100”app has not been able to improve students' interest in oral English learning. Students can only speak to provide a platform for their learning and correct their deficiencies in pronunciation and oral English.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Through the analysis of questionnaire results and interview results, the following suggestions are provided.

Firstly, the emphasis of teaching should be put on the classroom. Although offline oral English practice app can make up for some deficiencies in class, teachers should try

their best to ensure that students can get sufficient exercise in oral English class, instead of assigning tasks on the offline app.

Secondly, provide timely evaluation and encouragement for students' oral English. In daily oral English class teaching, more encouragement should be given to students' oral English. Although there is a scoring system in the offline oral English practice app, the teacher's encouragement will make students more motivated than the offline scoring system.

Thirdly, students can be grouped for oral study. When learning offline using app, students also have classmates to communicate with. In this way, students can create an environment for oral practice and dialogue in class, and students can be urged to improve their interest in oral practice in class.

Through experiments and data analysis, this study verified the hypothesis that app has a positive effect on relieving oral anxiety of English learners. The conclusions are as follows : compare with traditional classroom teaching methods, using English app to practice oral English will change students' progress anxiety and speech anxiety, which can promote students' confidence in oral English courses, but not significantly. Compared with using all apps for oral English practice, the teaching method combining app with traditional oral English practice can reduce students' oral anxiety more effectively.

Due to the influence of knowledge level and practical reasons, the following explanations are made for the deficiencies of research and personal reflection:

Firstly, the sample size is small and the representativeness is limited. In this study, only one class of students was selected from a middle school in Huangshi. The sampling range was limited, and the results were not universal to some extent.

Secondly, the revised questionnaire of junior high school students' oral English anxiety may not be scientific enough in dimension.

Thirdly, in the process of questionnaire survey, because I am the English practice teacher of the class, it cannot be excluded that some students may not fill in the questionnaire due to their concerns, which will affect the authenticity of the survey conclusion to some extent.

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