

Application of Affective Filter Hypothesis in Junior English Vocabulary Teaching

Ling Wang

School of Foreign Languages, Nanchang Normal University, Nanchang, China

Abstract—With the continuous development of new curriculum reform, language teaching is paid more attention to the learners' affective state. Affective factors are becoming more and more important factors affecting learners. Therefore, English educators need to make good use of affective factors during the teaching. This thesis researches the middle school students' emotional problems in the vocabulary learning from three aspects of affective filter hypothesis: motivation, confidence and anxiety and finds the problems of middle school students in English vocabulary learning, then applies this theory in vocabulary teaching. The research shows that the affective filter hypothesis is applied in Junior Middle School English vocabulary teaching. It effectively improves teachers' teaching proficiency and is good for students' vocabulary learning.

Index Terms—affective filter hypothesis, affective factors, English vocabulary teaching, application

I. INTRODUCTION

It is important for us to learn a foreign language because of the rapid development of globalization. The relationship among the countries becomes more intimate and we have more and more opportunities to communicate with the foreigner. In China, with the destruction of the Belt and Road, we are increasingly connected with countries that along the route. Therefore, the world's trend of establishing good relationship among different countries makes more and more people learn a second language, such as English, German, French, etc. Chinese is our mother tongue and it's the main language in China. And the English, the second large language in China, covers all grades in school. However, as for Chinese students, they have difficulty in learning English, which is a second language. In the past, we think the students' problems in learning English are just the negative external environment and the poor cognitive level, but some studies find that the factors that affect English learning include not only the external environment and their own cognitive level, but also the internal affective factors of learners. In the 1980s, Krashen comes up with the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and he believes that the affective factors influence the foreign language acquisition. Arnold (2000) believes that emotion is an important factor affecting language learning and teaching. And Brown (2002) examines the influence of affective factors on language teaching and we should cultivate students' positive emotion. The learners' feelings may stop students from learning to speak a foreign language (Snezana Kirova, Bilijana Petkovska, & Dragana Koceva, 2012). Tayebeh Zarezadeh (2013) points out that emotional intelligence will affect English language learning. Esen Sucuolu (2017) uses a research to analyze the influence of motivational strategies in secondary school and points out teachers should adopt more motivational strategies in the class. Therefore, learners' affective factors should not be ignored and the affective factors also play an important part in the process of learning English. In our county, we start to pay attention to the affective factors on the process of learning English very late. In the past, teachers are the leaders in the class and all students must obey the teacher. Consequently, in the English class, teachers teach the knowledge regardless of students whether accept the knowledge, and many students also have affective problems in learning English. Because of the improvement of the new curriculum reform, students' learning way is not in a passive way and students are the leader of the class. We notice the affective factors can influence the English learning based on the development of the affective filter hypothesis because of the development of the technology. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the affective factors in the process of teaching English. Nowadays, many researches apply the affective filter hypothesis to guiding English teaching and make students learn English efficiently. Wu Xue (2014) applies the affective filter hypothesis to alleviating freshman oral English fossilization. Li Ping (2017) points that the middle school students English writing score prominently connects with students' feelings through three aspects: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Therefore, teachers apply the affective filter to teaching vocabulary, it will be good for English educators to use effective and various ways to teach vocabulary. It is not only good for the teachers, but also good for the students. Teachers can adopt many innovative teaching ways to teach vocabulary efficiently and students are willing to learn vocabulary efficiently. For teachers, first of all, they will take a variety of measures to arouse the students' learning motivation and they can give right advice to students or change their teaching way to arouse the students' learning motivation. Secondly, teachers use targeted approaches to enhance students' learning confidence. Teachers can fully consider the individual differences of students in the teaching process and take advantage of students' strengths and let them develop their strengths in the class. Therefore, students will have confidence in learning English words well. Thirdly, teachers could create a good atmosphere to lower student's anxiety. When students study vocabulary in an relaxed condition, they can master vocabulary quickly and well. Wang Fan (2019) notes that teachers

should actively explore and use a variety of teaching methods flexibly, and pay attention to students' emotional changes in class. Zhang Juanjuan (2018) mentions that many art students lack the confidence and motivation of learning English and they have high anxiety. It means that they have a high affective filter. Therefore, the affective factors have an essential impact on English teaching and learning. Between teachers and students, students can exchange their emotional state and control their emotion through these three aspects: motivation, confidence and anxiety. Teachers can take a variety of measures to enhance students' motivation and confidence, lower their anxiety, which is helpful to improve students' learning ability and teachers' teaching proficiency.

II. RESEARCH OBJECT AND DATA ANALYSIS

A. Research Object

This study takes 121 students from two classes in Grade Eight in Xinfeng Jiudu Middle School as the research object, and investigates the students' emotional state in vocabulary learning through the questionnaire survey, and finds the problems of middle school students in English vocabulary learning. The author uses questionnaire method, and 121 questionnaires were sent out and 121 were recovered. The content of questionnaire, based on three aspects of affective filter hypothesis, was about the influence of affective factors in the process of students' vocabulary learning. In this questionnaire, the author designs fifteen questions that all of these are about choice questions. The questionnaire mainly includes three aspects: motivation, confidence, anxiety. The research content mainly includes four aspects: students' interest in learning English, students' learning motivation in vocabulary learning, students' confident level in vocabulary learning and students' anxious level in vocabulary learning. Questions 1 to 2 have a fair idea of the students' interest in learning English; questions 3 to 5 are about students' learning motivation in vocabulary learning; questions 6 to 10 are about students' confidence in vocabulary learning; questions 11 to 15 are about students' anxious level in vocabulary learning. According to this questionnaire, it finds that there are some problems in English vocabulary teaching in Junior Middle School.

B. Data Analysis

First of all, 88% of the students are interested in English learning. And 80% of the students agree that they learn English because of their interests. This shows that many students like English rather than dislike English and interest is an important factor in the process of English learning. So we should make students keep this enthusiasm in learning English and cultivate the interest of other students who are weak in English. But only 20% of the students think that they are interested in English words, and 96% of the students agree that they have to learn English vocabulary in order to pass senior high school entrance examination. 92% of the students argue that they learn English vocabulary in order to pass the English test. The result reveals that although students do not want to learn English words, they still have to learn English words and it's mainly because of their external motivation. A majority of students are willing to learn English vocabulary in order to pass the test. Nowadays, students learn English at very young age, but 28% of students agree that learning English vocabulary is easy with the help of teachers' teaching way, and 15% of students don't agree that they can master a large number of English words under the teaching. 81% of students feel dissatisfied with their vocabulary memory level and 81% of students agree that they will seek for the help of dictionary firstly rather than guess the right meaning when they see unfamiliar vocabulary. 90% of students are lack of confidence in reading English words because they don't master phonetic symbols well. These answers show that lots of students don't have sufficient confidence in vocabulary learning even under the guidance of teachers.

Anxiety also has an effect on vocabulary learning. Based on this questionnaire survey, 88% of the students agree that they feel nervous when they know the teachers will ask question to them during English class, and 80% the students think that they feel nervous when they don't understand what the English teacher say during English class. 70% the students agree that they will feel nervous when they read unfamiliar word. But only 20% students are not afraid to read words when they read unfamiliar word. 75% of students think that they feel nervous when they dictate English words. This shows that students have high level of anxiety. The survey shows that a majority of students have problems in learning vocabulary from the perspective of affective factors. Therefore, the author will discuss these affective problems in English vocabulary learning in junior middle school and analyze how to improve English vocabulary teaching in junior middle school under the basis of affective filter hypothesis.

III. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY LEARNING

From the data obtained from the above survey, we can know that students have high affective filter. It means students absorb less information and filter more information, resulting in less language acquisition. And from three aspects of the affective filter hypothesis, there exist the following problems in the English vocabulary learning in current junior middle school: lack of enough internal motivation, lack of sufficient confidence, and high level of anxiety.

A. Lack of Enough Internal Motivation

Although a majority of students like English, they spend less time learning vocabulary. And they are also not willing to remember vocabulary. According to the survey, we can know that a lot of students are not interested in vocabulary

learning, their internal motivation that want to learn vocabulary well and contact more vocabulary is not strong. And they think they have to learn vocabulary in order to pass the examination. Therefore, the main motivation of students on learning vocabulary is external motivation. They learn vocabulary because of the force of environment. Zhuan Juanjuan(2018) thinks that “external motivation is more unstable than internal motivation, and students are easy to give up the goal when encountering difficulties or setbacks”. Thus, lots of students learn vocabulary passively and then they will neglect the vocabulary when they have difficult in learning vocabulary. During the current English class, students do not always learn and recite the vocabulary actively because they do not want to learn vocabulary internally. Even sometimes teachers assign task about vocabulary, students are not willing to do it. This shows that students don't have enough internal motivation to learn vocabulary which results in students' low enthusiasm for vocabulary learning. Because a majority of students think that they learn English in order to pass examinations, they don't remember the words they learned after a long time. They can learn and recite vocabulary in a short time in order to finish the task, but they forget the vocabulary quickly after the examination. Although students have enough external motivation to learn vocabulary, many students think it's difficult for them to remember vocabulary. But if students have enough internal learning motivation to learn vocabulary, they will want to know the history and the culture contained in the words and to explore the mysteries of English words. Teachers should pay attention to cultivate students' internal motivation.

B. Lack of Sufficient Confidence

Confidence is the foundation of the road to success, which reflects our confidence in life. Therefore, confidence is an important factor in vocabulary learning. When Students who have sufficient confidence face difficulties, they often mobilize their existing knowledge and ability to overcome difficulties and then complete the task. But when students who are lack of confidence when facing difficulties, they always choose to neglect difficulties or avoid making mistakes. When students have confidence in learning vocabulary, they can learn English well. However, according to the survey, many students don't have sufficient confidence in the process of learning English. When students meet unfamiliar words, they would look for the help of the dictionary or the teachers firstly rather than guess the meaning firstly. This shows that they don't have enough confidence in their ability about guessing the meaning of vocabulary. Moreover, some students think that they can't master a large number of vocabularies in the English class. They think even under the guidance of teacher, they can't fully master these extra words in the English class. In the current English class, students are afraid of reading vocabulary in the class because they are afraid of being laughed at by their classmates.

C. High Level of Anxiety

In the traditional class, teachers always teach vocabulary in the class and they always read them and then let students follow her to read. Then, teachers may ask some students to read words after reading them a few times. Some students who don't comprehend the words feel nervous when teacher ask students to read. They are in a state of high anxiety when they are in English class. Anxiety plays a part in vocabulary learning and will influence the students' normal psychological state, even hinder students' language acquisition. Students will feel nervous and feel blank when they are in anxiety. According to the survey, a majority of students think they have a high level of anxiety when teachers ask questions. Because they are afraid of making mistakes when they answer the questions or they don't know the answers. And lots of students think that they will be nervous when they don't understand what the teacher says and they will feel nervous when they read unfamiliar words. Therefore, when students learn vocabulary, they are in high level of anxiety.

IV. APPLICATION OF AFFECTIVE FILTER HYPOTHESIS IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY TEACHING

This chapter will apply affective filter hypothesis to the English vocabulary teaching class from three aspects: applying activities to enhance students' internal learning motivation, adopting team work to build up students' confidence and creating a relaxed atmosphere to reduce anxiety, to decrease affective filter function and improve students' learning enthusiasm.

A. Applying Activities to Enhance Students' Internal Learning Motivation

As we all know, interest is the best teacher. Therefore, increasing students' interest in learning vocabulary is good for enhancing students' internal learning motivation. When teachers teach the words, they can use various activities to increase students' interest. During the vocabulary learning, firstly, playing a game: you draw I guess. Teachers draw some half-finished pictures about related English words and let students guess words. Students can think up many related words, and this can arouse their interest so that they are willing to guess the words and learn words. In this way, students feel happy and relaxed when they learn new words and can lay a good foundation for the next process of learning. Then, when teachers teach the new words, they use related colorful pictures to present vocabulary that could leave a vivid image in students' brain. For example, when teachers teach English words about jobs, they present some pictures about jobs and then let students guess the new words. Then show a video to present situation in which the words are used and let students pay attention to the words of pronunciation. Junior middle school students often show great interest in watching the video and they can concentrate on watching it. During watching the video, students would learn the words in the context and experience the difference even in the same words. After that, teachers play a role-playing game and divide students into several groups, then students play their roles to practice the conversation in

their groups. Then teachers choose a group to show. In this way, Students are willing to learn and understand the words well in the process of practical use. Then teachers also tell the cultural connotation or some cultural stories contained in the words. This way will let students know culture atmosphere or cultural differences between the East and the West so that it can deepen students' understanding of words. Teachers can also organize cultural background knowledge speech about vocabulary. Group members search the words' information from the perspective of source, development, difference. Each group chooses a representative to present the information which they search about English words. Through this way, students will know more about English words and further know words so that they can transfer their external motivation to internal motivation. Then teachers use continuous games to let students read words in the happy atmosphere. Such as passing the ball, what is missing, bomb bombing. After students learning new words, teachers play a song when students pass the ball. When the music stops, the student who holds the ball reads the words. Next, play a game of what is missing, teachers let students remember the new words in a short time in the screen, and then students speak out the missing words. Teachers also could choose a word as a bomb or choose some words as bombs. Students have to avoid these words when they read. If they read these bomb words, they will fail. These ways of learning words is good for students' image memory of vocabulary and can make it easier for students to remember words. Many students think it's difficult for them to remember. Therefore, teachers can play a reorganized words game. Teachers scrambled the letters of the words and make students put the letters in right order to make a word. Students who answer it quickly and accurately will get a point. In the end, teachers reward the person with the highest score. Teachers also can adopt mind map to expand related vocabulary by using a group competition game. For example, when teachers teach words about weather, group members could use a mind map to write more words about weather. Then the group which writes the largest number of words wins. And teachers also explain some common structure in some words and then guide students to conclude some useful methods, the method of roots, affix, etc, to remember words. Therefore, students could find that it's not difficult for them to learn and remember vocabulary when they have difficulty in learning vocabulary.

B. Adopting Team Work to Build up Students' Confidence

Students' confidence comes from two parts: one part comes from the teachers and the other part comes from students. The latter seems more important for students. Effective teaching not only requires good cooperation between students and teachers, but also requires good cooperation among students. According to the survey, a majority of students in the junior middle school are afraid of reading vocabulary because they don't know how to read and be afraid of being laughed by their classmates when they read. And as for vocabulary learning, phonetic symbols are the foundation of English words. Therefore, from the perspective of teachers, teachers should build solid foundation of phonetic symbols for students to build up students' confidence in vocabulary learning. Teachers can show some interesting cartoons about phonetic symbols to teach phonetic symbol again and give students more encouragement to reduce students' inferiority complex in vocabulary learning. In the process of teaching, teachers divide students into several teams. During teaching phonetic symbols, teachers design an answer-question game. When teachers point a phonetic symbol, one student read it quickly and accurately. Then his group will get a point. At the end, the teacher rewards the winning group. In this way, it can not only help students review the knowledge, but also help students build up their confidence in learning vocabulary. When teachers teach new words, firstly they can choose to teach some easy words from the new words and then gradually teach the difficult words. It is good for students to understand vocabulary form easy to difficult. When students still don't know to read the words, teachers can use encouraging way to lead him to read them out slowly instead of saying I don't know. At the same time, it is a good way to gradually build up students' confidence in vocabulary learning. Then teachers can design a group competition game. Group members read the new words one by one, teachers see which group reads fast and then reward the winning group. During learning new words, some students are afraid of reading even if they know how to read. In this way, students would pluck up the courage to read words in order to help their team win the glory. Teachers also let groups make up a story according to these new words. After telling the start of story, group members have to make up the story through sentence by sentence. These ways enable students to increase students' confidence unconsciously and lets them feel the happy atmosphere while learning. When one student read the words mistakenly, teachers could ask this student to look for help of his group members and ask this student read it again. Then, the whole class applaud him. In this way, students would feel the kindness of his group members instead of the ridicule from his classmates so that it can build up students' confidence in reading vocabulary.

C. Creating a Relaxed Atmosphere to Reduce Anxiety

As for the teachers and students, teaching is a kind of emotional communication. Effective teaching not only depends on understanding and mutual trust between teachers and students, but also on the harmonious atmosphere. Anxiety is one of the most important and the most complex affective factors in language acquisition. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis inspires that vocabulary teaching needs to create a relaxed atmosphere to make a low affective filter. Less anxious learning environment is good for vocabulary learning, which demands teachers master the methods to decrease students' anxiety. Relaxed and cheerful teaching atmosphere is benefit for students' study in the class. The participants of teaching are the teachers and students and teachers are the creators for the class atmosphere. And according to the survey, most students think the class atmosphere is anxious and they will be nervous when they answer questions. Therefore, firstly, when teaching English words, teachers should be amiable and they can use interesting competition

games to reduce students' anxiety. So that teachers create relaxed teaching atmosphere and students could master knowledge quickly. Then, teachers could give positive reaction or encouragement, rather than give the simple evaluation of right or wrong when students answer questions. In this way, students may produce less anxiety and have a sense of achievement. Next, in the class, teachers could find learners' advantages and take pride in their subtle improvement. When students answer questions even they make mistake, teachers should take an encouraging approach. Because many students are afraid of making mistakes, they feel nervous when they answer questions that teachers ask them. Therefore, when students answer questions, the teacher should understand, encourage and respect students. They shouldn't be completely denied when students make mistakes. During traditional way of dictating English words, students always feel nervous. Therefore, the teacher could use different ways to examine students' mastery degree of English words. For example, use a Bingo game during dictating English words or play a filling blank game to exam students.

V. CONCLUSION

The combination of affective filter hypothesis and junior English vocabulary teaching brings many benefits and it's also offer lots of development space for junior English teaching. In the meantime, students' emotion plays an important part in language learning and it's viable for teachers to teach vocabulary and it's effective for students to learn vocabulary. Under the guidance of affective filter hypothesis, teachers can further know students' psychological state and improve students' interest in learning and give useful advice for students' English learning. Students can learn the vocabulary effectively and actively. The use of affective filter hypothesis in English vocabulary can offset some disadvantages in traditional teaching. As for teachers, teachers can make use of the affective factors and reduce students' affective filter to help students to learn vocabulary. They can adopt various ways to reduce the influence of affective factors on students so as to facilitate students' vocabulary acquisition. Teachers can create peaceful teaching environment and use the teaching method of vocabulary according to students' individual emotion, so that students can acquire vocabulary in a positive attitude and educators could control the class with high efficiency.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is funded by 11531 projects of Nanchang Normal University

REFERENCES

- [1] Brown, H. D. (2002). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [2] Esen Sucuoglu. (2017). Analysis of Motivational Strategies Used by English Language Teachers Teaching at Secondary Schools. *Procedia Computer Science*, 6,120-123.
- [3] ane Arnold. (2000). *Affect in Language Learning*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [4] Kirova, S., Petkovska, B., & Koceva, D. (2012). Investigation of Motivation and Anxiety in Macedonia While Learning English as a Second/Foreign Language. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7, 46-47.
- [5] Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- [6] Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- [7] Li Ping. (2017). Research on the Influence of "Affective Filter Hypothesis" on Junior Middle School English Writing. Zhengzhou University, 18-20.
- [8] Tayebeh Zarezadeh. (2013). The Effect of Emotional Intelligence in English Learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 84-86.
- [9] Wang Fan. (2019). Application of Krashen's "Affective Filter Hypothesis" in English Teaching in Primary and Secondary schools. *Research in Basic Education*, 04, 46-49.
- [10] Wu Xue. (2014). Research on oral Rigidity of first-year students based on emotion filtering theory. Jilin University, 25-28.
- [11] Zhang Juanjuan. (2018). Application of affective Filter Hypothesis in English Teaching of High School Art Students -- A Case study of Jimo No. 4 Middle School. Shandong Normal University, 29-31.

Ling Wang was born in 1967 in Jian, China .She received her bachelor of Art degree in linguistics from Jiangxi Normal University, China in 1995. She is currently an associate professor in the School of Foreign Languages, Nanchang Normal University, Nanchang, China. Her research interests include cross-cultural teaching and teaching methods. Prof. Wang is a member of the Chinese Association of Foreign Language Teacher.