

The Application of Interpersonal Communication Theory: Speaking in English Corners

Qianlin Chen*

University of Leeds, School of Media and Communication, LS1 9JT Leeds, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author. Email: fy19qc@leeds.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Interpersonal communication is one of the most frequent communications in our daily life. Good interpersonal communication can promote people's conversation skills and brings to a closer relationship. English corner is seen as an efficient way to practice oral English in the process of learning English. In this circumstance, interpersonal communication can be fully embodied, and students are enabled to take advantage of it. The analyzing theme of this essay is how interpersonal communication is applied in the language speaking of English corner. It will use the basic idea of interpersonal communication theory to explain why English learners can enhance their spoken English in English corner and even improve their confidence and conversation skills. In the process of practicing English in English corner, speakers can achieve a virtuous circle of learning and using language via interpersonal communication.

Keywords: *Interpersonal communication theory, English corner, Language learning, Interpersonal competence, Psychological noise*

1. INTRODUCTION

Comparing with mass communication or social communication, interpersonal communication is closer and more effective in our life. It can happen while you discuss social issues in seminars, get in touch with your family members on social media and have a business conversation with clients. It focuses on building interpersonal relationships between speakers and emphasizes the significance of communication competence as well. As an international student who studies communication and media, the author gradually realizes the experience of participating in English corner was a good example to analyze the application of interpersonal communication in people's life. While English became the lingua franca in the world, lots of people and countries were going to learn English to follow the trend. Therefore, this essay will focus on analyzing the interpersonal communication in the process of speaking in English corner, then it will discuss how non-native speakers participate in English corner online under the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose is to understand why the interpersonal communication in the English corner is positive and helps participants practice English and evaluate to what extent psychological noise in interpersonal communication affects speakers' expressions. Initially, the essay will unpack how

interpersonal communication is used in English corner conversation. This will be followed by illustrating the reason speakers can find self-confidence in English corner speaking and how psychological noise as a negative factor impacts English learners to speak out. In the ending chapter, there is a discussion and some suggestions for developing the online English corner in the future, and how to keep efficient interpersonal communication virtually. The meaning of this essay is to provide an example for students who are studying English or interpersonal communication to help them understand the connection of interpersonal theory and our daily life.

2. CONCEPT DEFINITION

DeVito [3] in his book clearly defined that "the interpersonal communication is the verbal and nonverbal interaction between two (or sometimes more than two) interdependent people". It indicates people interact with others verbally and nonverbally, which means that they not only send messages through texts or languages, but also show their feelings by body gestures, facial expressions, or emotion at that moment. According to the interaction in interpersonal communication, this is based on the transaction model of communication that includes sources (encoding) and receivers (decoding) who send

messages to each other through channels and also have feedbacks with the interruption of noise [3]. Also, comparing with the mass media, interpersonal communication focuses on the impact of relationships between two or more people rather than facing a large group of audiences. During the interaction of interpersonal communication, people exchange information and reflect accordingly, which informs progressive communication and enhances their relationship [9]. Interpersonal communication provides a stance to the nuance of communication so that this is always used to research basic conversations in family, school, or workplace. English corner, as a specific public sphere of learning English, provides opportunities for English learners to practice their oral English and conversational skills through interactional conversation [4]. It encourages participants to express their ideas by discussing some topics together, which improves their competence in English speaking. In the English corner, interpersonal communication can be reflected in two or more people's debates or their behaviors and emotions of small presentations. Therefore, English corner could be considered as a practical example for studying interpersonal communication in our daily life.

3. RESEARCH

In the education of English, comparing with grammar practice or writing skills, speaking is paid less attention to, which could be reflected in the passive listening of students in classes [5]. To some degree, a so-called good English learner is only good at listening to others, writing gorgeous articles rather than speaking fluently when they communicate with others for the first time. In other words, there is no environment for students to use English outside classes. English corner hence is considered as an appropriate place to turn their theories into practices. The reason English corner can improve oral English is not only to provide specific opportunities for participants to speaking English but more importantly enhance their interpersonal competence. Solomon and Theiss [9] claimed that "Interpersonal communication competence, then, is the ability to use well the symbols that represent ideas and create a personal connection with another person." It represents whether a person enables to engage in different conversations without obstacles and utilize his language skills or proper expressions to show friendliness to others. Regard as interpersonal competence in English corner, this plays a significant role in communicating with people from different countries. Participants are encouraged to make friends with people who have distinct cultural backgrounds through speaking English [6]. As DeVito [3] indicated that mother language will affect the logic of learning other foreign languages, English learners are able to learn different strategies of studying English from other cultures. In addition, participants have more experience to treat with conversations based on specific cultural contexts. More

importantly, in the process of English communication, participants always repeat the circle of listening to others, understanding the messages, and responding to them. This is a classic listening process in interpersonal communication that Solomon and Theiss suggested. Being good at listening in English corner helps participants receive ideas of other people accurately, which also decides if they can follow topics immediately and react on time. Therefore, participating in English corner improves both English skills and the capacity for interpersonal conversation via practicing each section of interpersonal communication.

Solomon and Theiss [9] argued that "interpersonal communication is imperfect." It means speakers who talk in this conversation cannot always catch other people's points or follow all ideas as sometimes they are hard to express their thoughts clearly due to interruptive factors. The element that influences the delivery of information is 'noise [3]' in the transactional model of communication mentioned above. The four noises which affect the process of interpersonal communication are physical noise, psychological noise, physiological noise, and semantic noise [3]. In English corner, participants usually worry about their expressions because they are afraid to their lower level of English. As a consequence, freshers in English corner feel shy and embarrassed to discourse themselves. Indeed, feeling fearful to make mistakes in a new circumstance and having stress to start a discussion is common in the communication of English corner [10]. This could be understood by psychologic noise and semantic noise in the interpersonal communication. On the one hand, non-native speakers feel anxious during the discussion in the English corner due to their lack of confidence. Before they come to the English corner, they put them in a humble situation because they know their oral English is not as professional as native speakers. This psychological noise leads to the avoidance of contribution in communication and makes them hard to show their characteristics completely. On the other hand, semantic noise comes from the difference between cultural backgrounds. As the same as learning a language, semantic noise impacts the methods of listening and understanding messages in interpersonal communication. Therefore, especially in English corner, two people who both come from different countries look more difficult to communicate than two native speakers or one English learner and one British. However, participants always can realize that everybody in the English corner cannot speak English as a native speaker, which brings psychological comfort in interpersonal communication. More importantly, English learners are willing to express themselves when other people in the conversation are patient to listen to their perspectives rather than criticizing their grammar. Also, the curiosity of different cultures can stimulate participants to ask questions in English corner, which is beneficial to cultivate enthusiasts of learning English.

4. DISCUSSION

In university, English corner is set up as educational material for helping students improve their oral English. A language enthusiast is always willing to find opportunities to speak out such as attending language activities or talk with foreign people whatever he faces culture crack or other communicational interruption [8]. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, students lost opportunities to communicate with other people face-to-face. So how could they move this learning place from offline to online? And how should we deal with new noises on the Internet? Participants may feel strange to face the screen and talk to other people. However, there are lots of new technologies and platforms to use for conducting English corner online. ‘Computer-mediated communication [9]’ provides more possibilities for online English corner such as flexibility of time and place, and students can use diverse digital functions in conversation. Indeed, the definition of interpersonal communication that DeVito addressed did not show the limitation of the virtual or actual world. In online English corner, for instance, although participants cannot communicate in person, they can use the shared board or screen in Zoom to contribute to the discussion or show their feelings by different emojis. Besides, speaking online may eliminate the noise of psychology because participants enable to sit in comfortable and familiar environments during the communication. Conversely, the negative effect of other noise such as physical noise results from the connection of the Internet should be thinking about in this specific kind of interpersonal communication.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, neither the real English corner in our university life nor online English practices under the pandemic, the rationale of interpersonal communication theory can help us understand the relationship between receivers and senders in a conversation. This article demonstrates that English learners could take advantage of interpersonal communication in English conversation, moreover, psychological noises further interrupt online English corner during the COVID-19 period. Compared to be a good English writer, paying more attention to become ‘practical linguists [2]’ may make more functions in daily communication. Through analyzing the application of interpersonal communication in English corner, it is easy to interpret why people gradually are willing to express their perspectives and how this positive circumstance decreases the psychological noise in the process of interpersonal communication. Only focusing on the high accuracy of grammar in writing tasks [1] is not the efficient and completed method to study English, Schools should hold other activities outside classes for students to practice their knowledge [7]. In this essay, there are still lots of weaknesses in arguments and the

process of analysis. More details of the transactional model of communication should be provided and the other two noises in interpersonal communication should be mentioned in the concrete example of English corner. In the future, I would like to study further the process of listening and the transactional model in order to have a more complete understanding of interpersonal communication.

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