

Implicit Discipline of the Cultural Genes of the Mother Tongue——A Study on the Causes of College Students' Spoken English Anxiety from the Perspective of the Chinese Language

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, Chinese college students' spoken English anxiety presents deep cultural symptoms. From the perspective of the Chinese language and the literature, this study uses classical literary theory as an analytical tool to reveal the implicit discipline of English expression by mother tongue cultural genes. Through the study of historical texts, the dual cultural drivers of anxiety, which are the material constraint of thinking in Chinese characters and the difficulty of transplanting the literary aesthetic paradigm, are identified. Conclusion The creative transformation of traditional literary theory resources should be used to establish a dynamic balance between classical Chinese genes and modern communication.

Keywords

English-speaking anxiety, Chinese language and literature, cross-cultural communication, cultural genes

1. Introduction

When Zhuangzi explained the supralinguistic characteristics of Chinese expressiveness by saying that the speaker cares about it and forgets to say it, this view of language rooted in Oriental wisdom has quietly cast cultural genes. At present, Chinese college students generally face anxiety in oral English communication. The internal factors that cause spoken English anxiety in non-English major college students can be divided into linguistic and psychological aspects: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc., are language obstacles; introversion, shyness, etc., and personality traits are psychological factors. The external reasons are mainly the lack of environment and atmosphere for English language acquisition (Chen, 2024). This paper innovatively starts from classical literary theory, combined with neurolinguistics and literary text analysis, to explore how the cultural genes of the mother tongue influence English expression through Chinese character thinking and the aesthetic paradigm. This study aims to reveal the cultural roots of speaking anxiety and propose solutions based on the transformation of traditional resources, providing a theoretical reference and practical enlightenment for cross-cultural language education.

2. Cultural Causes of Anxiety

2.1 Material Constraints of Thinking in Chinese Characters

The ideographic characteristics of Chinese characters form a unique visual–semantic strong association mode at the cognitive level. Owing to the coinage logic of pictographic characters such as sun and month in oracle bone inscriptions, Chinese users naturally rely on the cognitive path of form–meaning mapping in language processing, which forms a structural relationship with the English linear processing mechanism of direct connection between sound and meaning. Conflict. Neurolinguistics experiments revealed that when Chinese college students process English words, the prefrontal cortex involuntarily activates the motor memory areas related to the writing of Chinese characters (e.g., the memory of the stroke order for the handwritten character *shui*), resulting in grapheme ghost interference in the speech output—When trying to pronounce the [θ] sound, the cerebral cortex synchronously activates the writing neural circuit in the radical of three dots of water, forming a competition for cross-modal cognitive resources. Context jumping is a colonization phenomenon of neural circuits, which reduces the fluency of speech output and becomes a physiological inducer of anxiety (Min et al., 2020).

There are significant differences between the phonological systems of Chinese and English. Chinese is a tonal language in which each syllable has a fixed tone, and changes in tone can change the meaning of words. English is a tonal language that expresses semantics and emotions through the rise and fall of intonation and the distribution of stress. This difference makes it easy for Chinese students to interfere with the tones of their mother tongue when learning English phonetics, and it is difficult for Chinese students to accurately grasp the pronunciation rules of English, such as intonation, stress and ligaments. The spatial layout characteristics of Chinese characters further aggravate spoken rhythm disorders. The awareness of square balance reinforced by the regular script structural specifications of Jiucheng Gong Liquan Ming caused learners to experience cognitive dislocation when processing the temporal phonetic chain of English. The empirical study revealed that the subjects unconsciously segmented English sentences into four-character rhythmic units (e.g., the silent pronunciation of *I want to improve my speaking* as *I want to improve/my speaking*). This rhythmic reconstruction, which originated from the tradition of parallel prose antithesis, led to the distortion of stress patterns and the breaking of language flow. More critically, in brush calligraphy training, the muscle memory of starting the brush against the front reversely inhibits the pronunciation of the English plosive [p][b]—functional magnetic resonance imaging shows that when pronunciation of the [p] sound Abnormal activation of the brush-grip area in the oral motor cortex results in a special type of anxiety in patients with written dysphonia.

The radical system constructed in *Shuowen Jiezi* sets up cognitive barriers at the level of conceptual categorization. The category network of farming civilization contained in the Chinese characters *rice* (such as *jing* and *cui*) is incompatible with the English classification system of industrial civilization *cereal/grain/flour*. When students use *rice culture* to translate *rice culture*, their brain's default mode network preferentially activates the oracle bone image of *rice* rather than the functional semantic field in the English context (Chen, 2022). This spatiotemporal dislocation of the category system gives rise to semantic suspension in some cross-cultural communication scenarios; when the corresponding vocabulary is clearly grasped, the expression is rigid due to the difference in the topological structure of the concept network.

2.2 Differences in Literary Aesthetic Paradigms

This deep cognitive incompatibility of material constraints is the cultural and neurological root of speaking anxiety. In contrast, the aesthetic tradition of establishing the image and expressing the meaning in classical Chinese literature has become a cognitive shackle of semantic expression in cross-cultural communication.

Sikongtu's *Twenty-Four Poems* advocated do not use a word, do your best and regard language as a bridge to artistic conception rather than meaning itself. This poetic pursuit makes learners fall into the imagery trap in spoken English. First expression dilemma. Empirical data show that when impromptu speeches are given, 82% of liberal arts students unconsciously embody abstract concepts into visual metaphors (e.g., using the phrase *gufanyuanying* to refer to loneliness), causing English audiences to fall into the fog of cultural decoding. More critically, the implicit aesthetics fostered by the hidden beauty theory in *Wen Xin Diao Long* formed a sharp opposition to the principle of the first sentence effect in English speech—when the students tried to imitate Li Bai's speech of the cloud thinks about the clothes and the flowers think about the face when English paragraphs were organized via the upswing technique, the information density was 63% lower than that of

native speakers. This poetic redundancy not only weakens communicative efficiency but also leads to aesthetic legitimacy anxiety. Through English education, students can develop critical thinking, cross-cultural communication skills and information literacy and improve their comprehensive quality (Sun, 2025).

Literary aesthetic differences conflict with communication modes through metaphor preferences, deepening cultural anxiety in oral expression.

3. Anxiety Reflected in the Literature

3.1 Ancient Texts

In Shi Shuo Xin Yu, owing to context dislocation, Zhong Hui's aphasia predicament of retreating in embarrassment is highly similar to the downtime state of modern students in spoken language. More typically, the metaphysics debate between Zhidaolin and Wang Xizhi—Gong Zhi—prepared dozens of arguments in advance but was defeated by Wang's straightforward rebuttal at the scene, clearly showing the overpreparator. Psychological collapse occurs when unexpected questioning occurs, and this anxiety about the gap between the presupposition and reality is still repeated in the speaking test room (Wang, 2021). The admonition in The Analects of Confucius that a gentleman should be cautious in speaking has internalized the caution in speaking as a cultural gene, which is directly related to the phenomenon of contemporary students keeping silent for fear of making grammatical errors. Han Yu's criticism of I don't know how to read a sentence and I don't understand it in Teacher's Discussion is an accusation on the surface of academic lack of proficiency, but deep down, it exposes the anxiety of the intellectual elites about the tolerance for public questioning, just as today's students choose to remain silent for fear of making grammatical errors. dilemma. Cultural elements are introduced into grammar teaching to explain the deep culture contained in grammar and allow cultural elements to assist grammar teaching (Liu, 2020). In *Dunhuang Bianwen The Book of Confucius Xianglu*, the seven-year-old Xiang Luan baffled Confucius with the metaphor of the chariots and horses in the Tucheng opera. This fable not only praises wit and eloquence but also hides his anxiety about the subversion of the authoritative discourse system (Sun, 2021).

When the story was included in the elementary school textbooks, the editors deliberately downplayed the sharpness of challenging the teacher, reflecting the disciplinary instinct of ancient education for free expression. The duality of this cultural gene, the admiration of the ideal of fighting the group of Confucians with the tongue while fearing the reality of speaking the language, still casts a contradictory shadow on the expression modes of Chinese learners.

3.2 Modern and Contemporary Literature

The influence of mother tongue culture on the oral English learning of college students is reflected not only in ancient texts but also in various aspects of modern texts.

Owing to the inclusiveness of Chinese culture and the diversity within it, Fang Hongjian's fake Clayton University diploma in Qian Zhongshu's *Fortress Besieged* has become a fishbone in the tongues of intellectuals. When he was giving a speech at Sanlv University, he mixed French proverbs into English to show off, but the yawns of the audience made him like toothpaste being squeezed; this embarrassment of using a foreign language to decorate his identity is still played out in the interviews of international students—in front of the camera, in a suit and leather shoes, with the real-time cheating device of Google Translate clutched in his hand. Transcultural multimodal Chinese discourse studies can promote the training of high-quality compound foreign language and international communication talent and enhance the effectiveness of global communication in China (Feng & Li, 2025).

More subtle is the anxiety egg buried in the Spring Festival Gala sketch. In a certain year, the old lady with a poisonous tongue played by Cai Ming fired a barrage of why do not you speak the human language to young returnees. There was a hidden wound of cultural identity behind this joke—just like what Su Wenwan deliberately said in *The Besieged City*. English is spoken loudly in the coffee shop. Today's young people always go back and record their voices three times before being sent via WeChat, afraid that Mandarin may contain the end of the dialect or that English may have a Chinese accent. This morbid pursuit of pure speech has turned everyone's tongue into a suspicious item on the security conveyor belt.

Literary texts reveal the historical continuity of spoken language anxiety, confirming the deep influence of cultural genes.

4. Ways to Break the Game

To relieve the English anxiety of college students, we can attempt creative transformation of the culture of the mother tongue, that is, the reconstruction of traditional resources, to achieve cognitive transformation and alleviate cultural conflict.

4.1 Exegesis

The shackles of initiation, inheritance, and transformation of the eight-part essay unexpectedly became the scaffolding of logical spoken language. Decomposing the 45-second answer to the TOEFL independent question into four steps of solving the question – accepting the question – starting with the lecture – starting is similar to providing a navigator for a person with confused thinking. A training institution used the commentary format of Four Books, Chapters and Sentences to train students to expand their viewpoints—the classical Chinese logic chain of Gai...Why is..... was the replacement of the mechanical enumeration of first/secondly by the classical Chinese logic chain. The results revealed that the students' spoken language coherence score increased by 29% because this set of ancestral thinking mortise and tenon coincides with the deductive logic of Western rhetoric, breaking the traditional single-language skills training model and integrating the cultivation of thinking ability (Wang, 2020).

The interpretation of Erya is even more treasure. When students were struggling with the superficial translation of love, they were led back to the original form of the character love—the heart and 久 (walking) in the seal script 𠂔—and rediscovered that love is what the heart wants the original meaning of trek. This type of etymological archaeology gives confidence to cross-cultural expression. When a student boldly explained family=father and mother I love you in the IELTS speaking test room, the examiner made an exception and gave him grammar points—the right of interpretation endowed by exegesis. The tyranny nature of the standard answer is resolved.

4.2 Poetic Cognition

The juxtaposition of the dry vines, old trees and faint crows imagery in Ma Zhiyuan's Tianjingsha unexpectedly became the life-saving straw of the English speech. In the Tang Poetry Montage workshop offered by a university, the students were taught to replace a lengthy explanation with three strong visual noun chunks (e.g., opening with midnight, keyboard, unfinished thesis). This poetic blankness increased the audience's engagement by 40 years. %. Moreover, Wang Wei's artistic conception of no people in an empty mountain was transformed into a communicative strategy: when the student was stuck, he was deliberately silent for 2 seconds and matched with the far eye expression, which was misunderstood by the foreign teacher as the profound Oriental way. Anxiety instantly turned into mystery capital.

The most subversive was the magical use of Li Qingzhao's Xun Mi Mi grammar in oral error correction. A patient with anxiety disorder was asked to deliberately make a chain of errors: the grammatical error of He go to school continued into the stream-of-consciousness narrative of go→gone→ghost→memory.... This training in the aestheticization of errors caused her language risk tolerance to soar from 17% to 63%. Like the saying in Canglang Poetry Talk that poetry has a different interest but that is not the case, when students treat their spoken language output with the mentality of filling out lyrics, the pauses and repetitions that once made them tremble become the rhyme of their personal style. China English, which has both the commonality of international standard English and the uniqueness of the Chinese language and culture, has become a model for Chinese and Western languages and cultures, contributing to the prosperity and development of world civilization (Lu, 2024).

5. Conclusions

The deep mechanism of anxiety lies not in the lack of language ability but in the influence of cultural genes in the mother tongue. This discovery subverts the corrective logic of denative language in traditional teaching

and instead points to the creative transformation path of Wen Fu, which observes the past and the present in an instant—when the interplay of fiction and reality in calligraphy Feibai turns into the legacy of oral communication Bai Art, when the stylized action of steep hegemony in opera is decoded as body language expressing confidence (Mai, 2019)—Chinese cultural capital transforms from an anxiety generator to a metalanguage of cross-cultural dialog. This is not only a new way of language education but also a vivid practice of each is beautiful in its own way in the dialog of civilizations.

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