

# Junior High School EFL Teaching from the Affective Filter Perspective: A Case Study of a Reading-Writing Lesson

Xinyuan Xu, Lingling Liu\*

School of Foreign Studies, China Three Gorges University, Yichang 443002, China

\*Correspondence Author

**Abstract:** *Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that affective factors act as a filter on a learner's language input, thereby influencing the efficiency of language acquisition. A state of low affective filter, characterized by high motivation, high self-confidence, and low anxiety, is a key condition for facilitating language acquisition. Taking a high-quality junior high school English lesson as a case study, this paper explores how teachers can construct a low affective filter classroom environment through teaching language, interactive feedback, and activity design. The study finds that the teacher effectively lowered students' affective filter levels by using inclusive language and clear instructions to alleviate anxiety, employing positive feedback and encouraging interactions to boost confidence, and creating authentic situations to stimulate learning motivation. This study not only reveals the crucial role of affective factors in second language classrooms but also provides specific and practical references for frontline teachers to create a psychological environment conducive to language acquisition through classroom interactions.*

**Keywords:** Affective Filter Hypothesis, Junior High School English Teaching, Classroom Interaction, Teacher Feedback.

## 1. Introduction

Currently, the goal of foreign language teaching is shifting from the mere imparting of knowledge and skills to the comprehensive cultivation of students' emotions, cross-cultural awareness, and non-intellectual factors. Among these, non-intellectual factors such as interest, confidence, and autonomous learning ability are receiving particular emphasis [8].

In real classrooms, the teacher is not only a transmitter of knowledge but also a shaper of students' learning emotions and psychological states. However, existing studies mostly focus on theoretical elaborations and macro strategies, with a relative lack of micro-analysis based on real classroom interaction. Especially in the context of junior high school English teaching, empirical discussions on how teachers' behaviors specifically affect students' motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety need to be further deepened.

Therefore, from the perspective of the Affective Filter Hypothesis, this study selects a typical high-quality junior high school English lesson as a case study. Through systematic observation and textual analysis, it delves into how the teacher constructs a classroom environment with high motivation, strong self-confidence, and low anxiety through language, interactive design, and activity arrangement, thereby reducing students' affective filter level and promoting language acquisition. The research aims to provide classroom-based empirical support for the Affective Filter Hypothesis and offer references for foreign language teaching.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation

In the late 1970s, linguist Stephen Krashen proposed the Five Hypotheses of second language acquisition, which include the Affective Filter Hypothesis. This hypothesis emphasizes the

key role of affective factors in the process of second language acquisition. Krashen pointed out that affective factors can filter language input: if learners have a strong affective filter, it is easy to form emotional barriers that hinder language acquisition; on the contrary, if the affective filter is weak and emotional barriers are reduced, it helps to accelerate second language acquisition [5]. These filtering affective factors mainly include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Based on this, this study will focus on a high-quality junior high school English classroom, analyzing how the teacher, through teaching behaviors, fosters a classroom environment of high motivation, strong confidence, and low anxiety, thereby lowering students' affective filter levels and enhancing language acquisition.

## 3. Methodology

This study employs a case study approach, using a high-quality junior high school English lesson as an example to systematically explore the teacher's strategies for constructing a low affective filter classroom. The specific process is as follows:

First, a search was conducted on the Bilibili platform for "junior high school English high-quality lessons." A reading and writing lesson by Ms. Huang Jiayan, which had high view counts and positive evaluations, was selected as the analysis corpus. This lesson is from *Oxford Shanghai Edition 7A Unit 8 "Growing healthy, growing strong,"* with the text titled *How to be a healthy child*, and is included in the *Thirteenth Junior High School English Classroom Teaching Observation and Training Lesson Collection*.

The research process consists of three key steps. First, the classroom video was observed. Subsequently, teaching behaviors and teacher-student interactions were carefully recorded, guided by the three analytical dimensions of reducing anxiety, enhancing confidence, and stimulating

motivation. This process resulted in a set of detailed observation notes.

Finally, a qualitative analysis was conducted based on the observation notes and textual materials. Focusing on the three aforementioned dimensions, this analysis aims to summarize the specific strategies the teacher used to build a low-affective-filter classroom.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Anxiety

Brown [1] pointed out that anxiety is one of the main affective factors influencing second language learning. In teaching, Ms. Huang consciously uses various strategies to reduce students' anxiety, thereby creating a safe and supportive learning atmosphere.

#### 4.1.1 Using Clear Instructions to Build a Predictable Classroom

Ms. Huang is good at helping students sort out clear task steps through clear and patient instructions, reducing confusion caused by ambiguous requirements. She emphasizes paraphrasing and explanation to ensure all students can follow the teaching pace. This predictability effectively enhances students' sense of security in the classroom. For example, to alleviate time anxiety caused by time-limited tasks, she clearly explains the time requirements so that students understand the actual meaning of the time limit (Example 1). This is consistent with Wu's [11] view that teaching language should be concise in structure and diverse in form, expressing the same meaning through sentence pattern changes to maintain students' attention and interest.

##### Example 1:

T: Take out your material. Today you're going to read an information sheet from the health camp. I give you 10 seconds, which means you need to read it very fast.

When organizing group activities, Ms. Huang clearly and repeatedly explains the rules to reduce uncertainty. For example, she emphasizes in advance that "each group uses one worksheet together", so that students understand how the task proceeds and how they are expected to cooperate, thereby reducing the sense of bewilderment caused by ambiguous rules (Example 2). This design not only disperses individual pressure through shared tasks but also enhances students' sense of belonging and confidence through collaboration. Studies have pointed out that cooperative learning can broaden students' focus and alleviate anxiety; at the same time, individual contributions are reflected through collective achievements, which helps to improve self-confidence [12]. Ms. Huang's practice shows that integrating emotional support into such teaching practice can effectively help students reduce anxiety and build confidence.

##### Example 2:

T: Each group has only one worksheet, okay? You need to work together. Only one worksheet. That is the worksheet

used together.

#### 4.1.2 Embracing L1 Use and Accepting Emotional Needs

Ms. Huang embodies an inclusive approach to language in her teaching. When students encounter difficulties in expression, she allows them to flexibly use their mother tongue as an aid. For example, when explaining "at least", a student tentatively asks "Chinese?", and she responds "It's up to you.", and after the student says "至少" (at least) in Chinese, she repeats and reinforces it in English (Example 3). This approach not only relieves students' anxiety caused by language barriers but also maintains their confidence in expression, making the mother tongue a positive bridge in learning.

##### Example 3:

T: What else can you get from this picture?

S: We should drink at least 8 glasses of water.

T: right, you said at least 8 glasses of water. What does at least mean?

S: Chinese?

T: It's up to you.

S: 至少

T: it means the smallest amount of water you need everyday. Thank you.

#### 4.1.3 Employing Guided Feedback Instead of Direct Error Correction

In error correction, Ms. Huang tends to provide guided feedback rather than direct correction. She rarely directly negates students, but uses strategies such as paraphrasing and questioning to turn error correction into an opportunity for meaning negotiation and cognitive deepening. For example, when a student says "listen some relaxing music", she does not interrupt to correct, but naturally paraphrases it as "listen to some music" after thanking the student, providing the correct expression implicitly (Example 4). This strategy is theoretically called "recast", that is, teachers revise students' expressions without changing their original meaning without indicating errors explicitly [6]. Research suggests that direct error correction may interrupt expression and affect enthusiasm [12], while recasting helps students notice and compare the differences between their own language forms and the target language in interactions, thereby improving language accuracy [2].

##### Example 4:

S: If you want to fall asleep quickly, you should exercise more because it can make you tired and you can also listen some relaxing music.

T: Thank you. You have two suggestions, right? First, exercise. Second, listen to some music.

Teachers should pay attention to the authenticity of communication in classroom interactions, reduce closed-ended questions, and give students sufficient response time [13]. Ms. Huang's strategy of guided questioning embodies this concept. She integrates error correction into discussions and gives students more speaking opportunities through questioning. Research indicates that extending the

waiting time after a question helps students achieve more in-depth output [7], and giving thinking time can also avoid anxiety and mistakes caused by hasty answers [14]. Ms. Huang's practice integrates the above ideas. For example, when a student suggests "exercise helps sleep", she does not directly evaluate, but asks "Do you think I should do some exercise before I go to bed?" to guide students to self-correct based on life experience (Example 5). This approach not only ensures thinking time but also connects with real life, thereby enhancing students' motivation to participate in the classroom.

#### Example 5:

T: I have sleeping problems. I can't fall asleep quickly at night. I hope you can give me some suggestions.

S: If you want to fall asleep quickly, you should exercise more because it can make you tired.

T: Good, I have some questions for you. Do you think I should do some exercise before I go to bed?

S: No.

T: I visit my doctor and she told me I shouldn't do exercise before I go to bed. That makes me more excited. Maybe in the morning or in the afternoon.

## 4.2 Self-Confidence

Self-confidence, defined as trust in one's abilities developed through social interaction, is a primary factor in successful language learning [10]. In the classroom, Ms. Huang consciously enhances students' confidence by consistently providing positive feedback and affirming the value of their contributions.

### 4.2.1 Conveying Immediate Affirmation through Paraphrasing and Thanks

Ms. Huang is adept at using specific and immediate actions to affirm students. Every time a student speaks, she paraphrases their answer and adds a "Thank you" (Example 6). This teaching behavior holds multiple educational significances in interactions.

First, it conveys listening and respect. The thanks directly affirms the student's act of speaking; paraphrasing shows that the teacher is listening carefully and expresses immediate respect by confirming the student's views. This aligns with Wang & Huang's [9] view that teachers' authentic emotional expression is fundamental to fostering students' emotional literacy and cultivating a positive learning environment.

Second, this approach amplifies the value of students' contributions and provides a good model. By paraphrasing, the teacher clearly conveys the ideas of individual students to the whole class, making them materials for collective thinking, which greatly enhances the speakers' sense of being valued and contributing. Simultaneously, paraphrasing often naturally optimizes the student's language expression, serving as an implicit model and allowing the student to feel their expression is fully accepted. This reflects the concept of incentive evaluation emphasized by Guan [3], that is, teachers' language, eyes, and body language should serve appreciation education, thereby effectively improving students'

self-confidence.

#### Example 6:

T: You think you are healthy and strong, right? What makes you healthy?

S: Exercise.

T: Oh, exercise! Thank you.

S: I do exercise and eat healthy food

T: exercise and healthy food, Thank you. Thank you very much. Anyone else?

S: I hardly ever eat junk food.

T: Oh, you never eat junk food. Thank you. Thank you.

### 4.2.2 Encouraging Guessing and Creating a Safe Atmosphere

The teacher creates a safe atmosphere by encouraging guessing. For students' incomplete answers, she always accepts them first, using phrases like "Can you guess?" or "Very close." to guide. She focuses on protecting students' desire to express, allowing them to dare to try and build confidence through continuous practice. For example, when explaining "regularly" (Example 7), she guides students to guess through questions, responds positively with "Very close" to the student's attempt of "Maybe as more as we can", protecting and encouraging the student's willingness to try. Subsequently, she gradually guides students to summarize the meaning of "regularly" by introducing specific examples from her personal life. Throughout the process, students are always active thinkers and classroom participants, not passive information receivers.

#### Example 7:

T: How about the second suggestion?

S: We should exercise regularly.

T: What does regularly mean? Do you know the meaning of regularly? Can you guess the meaning of it? Anyone can guess the meaning of regularly?

S: Maybe as more as we can.

T: Very close. As much as we can. Different opinions? Maybe you can find some words you are familiar with to replace the word.

S: Do exercise everyday.

T: Thank you very much. I give you one example. I go to the gym regularly, every Tuesday and Thursday I go to the gym. I go to visit my dentist usually in June and September. This regularly mean?

S: I think it means keep to do something.

T: Keep doing something. Right. Thank you, regularly means do something often.

### 4.2.3 Building Scaffolds for Language Output to Improve Success Expectations

Ms. Huang is skilled at building scaffolds for students' language expression. She provides clear steps and specific examples to let students know where to start when facing output tasks. Such design not only reduces cognitive load but also significantly boosts students' confidence in completing tasks. For example, before the final output task, she guides students to actively observe and summarize sentence patterns for making suggestions (Example 8), thereby laying the

foundation for subsequent expression.

Example 8:

T: Some of you have noticed the sentence pattern or the sentence structure. What sentence structures are used under the picture?

S: If you want to .... you should...?

T: when do you use this sentence structure?

S: suggestions.

T: excellent!

T: If you want to... you should or shouldn't...? right? We use this sentence structure when we want to make suggestions. They are very useful structure. When we want to make suggestions, remember to use this structure.

When assigning the task of creating a health information sheet, the teacher provides a clear checklist. To ensure students accurately understand requirements like “reasonable suggestion,” she explains the concept through counterexamples, such as advising an insomniac to listen to rock music (Example 9). The teacher equips students with syntactic structures, evaluation criteria, and examples beforehand. This preparation provides clear direction and builds confidence for creative tasks, leading to more active language practice.

Example 9:

T: Today, you are going to make another information sheet. Here's the checklist for your information sheet.

T: Our suggestions should be reasonable. What is reasonable mean? For example, I can't fall asleep quickly and you suggest me listening to some rock and roll music. Is that reasonable? No, that's not reasonable. Okay, try to make your suggestions reasonable, and you need to use the sentence structure we learned today.

### 4.3 Motivation

Different learning needs and purposes can generate different learning motivations, which play a key role in second language acquisition [4]. In the classroom, Ms. Huang effectively enhances students' intrinsic motivation through various strategies.

#### 4.3.1 Creating Authentic Contexts to Stimulate Expression Willingness

Ms. Huang integrates language points into authentic contexts and guides students to play roles such as “advisors” and “helpers”. For example, when practicing sentence patterns for making suggestions, she does not directly ask students to make sentences, but takes the initiative to share her own sleep problems and asks students for suggestions (Example 10). This approach transforms pattern practice into real communicative activities, closely linking learning with life. Subsequently, she sustains the dialogue within the authentic context by asking detailed questions such as “What kind of music?” and “Should I listen to rock and roll?”, helping students use the target language naturally and logically in the process of solving practical problems.

Example 10:

T: I have sleeping problems. I can't fall asleep quickly at night. I hope you can give me some suggestions. Try to use this sentence structure and give me some suggestions.

S: If you want to fall asleep quickly, you should exercise more because it can make you tired and you can also listen some relaxing music.

T: Thank you. You have two suggestions, right? First, exercise. Second, listen to some music. I have some questions for you. My doctor also suggested me listening to some music, what kind of music? He said relaxing and slow music. But I also like rock and roll. Should I listen to some rock and roll?

S: No.

T: Yeah, light music and no exercise.

#### 4.3.2 Promoting Meaning Extension through Questioning

Ms. Huang is also good at helping students connect language practice with personal experiences through continuous questioning. For example, when a student recommends *Walden*, she further asks: “Why do you recommend that? Why do you suggest me reading this book?”, to promote students to integrate personal understanding into their expressions, thereby enhancing learning motivation and autonomy.

This kind of questioning is essentially an “extension” feedback. She naturally extends students' topics through questions, guiding them to express more personal ideas, which not only provides richer language input but also promotes students' understanding of linguistic knowledge. As Lin & Zhou [6] pointed out, extension serves an affective function. Teachers' extension feedback shows that they are listening attentively and are interested in students' responses, thereby stimulating students' learning enthusiasm and enhancing classroom participation.

Example 11:

S: You can read some relaxing books.

T: Can you give me one example of relaxing books?

S: I don't know what's English level the Chinese name of the book “瓦尔登湖”

T: Why do you recommend that? Why do you suggest me reading this book?

S: I think it is relaxing.

## 5. Conclusion

Grounded in the Affective Filter Hypothesis, this case study reveals how the teacher cultivated a low-anxiety, high-confidence, and motivating environment. These targeted practices lowered students' affective filters, thereby facilitating the conversion of language input into intake.

Specifically, Ms. Huang fostered a psychologically safe classroom atmosphere through clear instructions, inclusive use of the mother tongue, and effective error correction methods. Simultaneously, she consistently enhanced students' learning confidence through strategies like immediate paraphrasing, sincere thanks, encouraging guesses, and building language scaffolds. Furthermore, by creating

authentic contexts and employing guided questioning, she connected language learning with students' personal experiences, thereby stimulating their intrinsic motivation to express. These strategies cooperate with each other to jointly build a low affective filter and highly supportive classroom environment.

This case shows that the Affective Filter Hypothesis provides a powerful analytical perspective for understanding learning psychology and teacher-student interactions in junior high school English classrooms. Future research can expand the scope of lesson examples and compare the similarities and differences of emotional support strategies across different teaching styles, educational stages, and cultural backgrounds. Combining methods like learner interviews and psychological scales can further reveal the internal mechanism of the affective filter. This will provide a stronger foundation and practical strategies for building more supportive language classrooms.

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## Author Profile

**Xinyuan Xu** is a second-year postgraduate student at the School of Foreign Studies, China Three Gorges University, majoring in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. Her research interests include stylistics, identity construction, and discourse analysis.

**Lingling Liu** is an associate professor in China Three Gorges University and a master supervisor for postgraduates majoring in both Applied Linguistics and English language teaching. Her research interests include second language writing, English for academic purposes, and English language teaching.