The Influence of Background Music Teaching on Accuracy and Fluency of Freshmen's Oral English in China

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Abstract

Many students like listening to music through mobile phones or computers when they are studying after class. Some students stated they were more efficiency when they were studying with the background music; some claimed they were distracted by the background music. In English teaching, students tend to have anxiety due to various subjective and objective reasons. If students are too anxious, it will affect their oral performance, especially accuracy and fluency. Therefore, to help students improve their oral English, we need to help them overcome their anxiety. In oral English teaching, an effective way to relieve students' anxiety is to play background music. Because the musical background helps to create a relaxed atmosphere in which anxiety and tension are relieved and attention to the new content is aroused. The paper studied the influence of background music teaching on accuracy and fluency of freshmen's oral English. The results were in the following: 1). Background music teaching did not facilitate clear effect on oral accuracy of college students. To be specific, background music teaching only could help to reduce the rate of students' pronunciation error. In terms of syntactic errors and self-repair, the traditional teaching has decreased more than background music teaching. Background music teaching did not help to reduce lexical errors. 2). Compared with traditional teaching, oral fluency in background music teaching has not improved significantly. 3).This research results challenged the traditional idea that background music could achieve better teaching effect. Although background music might reduce the pressure and relieve the atmosphere, it could not help students to acquire more comprehensive input. Students need more quiet teaching environment and relevant module training, especially the flexible use of vocabulary, are needed to improve the accuracy and fluency of students' oral English to a greater extent.

Keywords: Background Music Teaching, Oral Fluency, Oral Accuracy

1. Introduction

Traditionally, the two main indicators of oral competence are accuracy and fluency [1]. In English teaching, students tend to have oral anxiety due to various subjective and objective reasons. If students are too anxious, it will affect their oral performance, especially accuracy and fluency. Krashen's Affective Filtering Hypothesis [2, 3] gave a more influential explanation. Krashen believes that motivation, confidence, anxiety and other emotional factors affect second language acquisition by influencing language input. In the above emotional factors, the role of anxiety cannot be ignored. If learners are too anxious, they will filter the language input, which is not conducive to second language acquisition. Therefore, if we want to help students improve their oral English, we need to help them overcome their anxiety. In oral English teaching, an effective way to relieve students' anxiety is to play background music. Because the musical background "helps to create a relaxed atmosphere in which anxiety and

tension are relieved and attention to the new content is aroused"[4]. In the 1960s, the Bulgarian psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov, put forward "Suggestopedia," which is also called "heuristic foreign language teaching methods." He suggested one of the teaching forms is background music teaching. This is a teaching method that makes use of the unique charm of music to generate suggestive power. Its effective implementation is conducive to creating a good atmosphere, so that students can relax, overcome anxiety, generate a sense of pleasure, and achieve the maximum teaching effect [5]. The "Mozart effect" proposed by American scientists in the early 1990s also proved that background music had a positive effect on language learning. Kenji Saeki [6], a Japanese scholar, proposed ten methods of using background music in middle school English classes based on his own teaching experience. Domestic scholars have also studied background music teaching. Wu Ailan [7] analyzed the influence of background music teaching on English proficiency of secondary school students. Cao Guangfa [5] discussed the psychological basis of background music teaching; Gong Jufang [8] studied the influence of Mozart background music on college students' English reading comprehension scores. To sum up, scholars at home and abroad have studied the relationship between background music and English learning from different perspectives. However, up to now, there has been no empirical research on the relationship between background music and oral accuracy and fluency of non-English-major freshmen in colleges and universities. This paper made an exploratory attempt in this regard.

2. Related Concepts

2.1. Background Music

Gong Jufang [8] defined background music as any type of music played when the listeners′ attention is focused on a task or activity rather than purely listening to the music. Classroom background music refers to the use of music in classroom to create an atmosphere or background environment conducive to students' acceptance of classroom teaching content. Background music serves as an auxiliary means to help students eliminate anxiety and other tension, so as to create a relaxed and happy learning atmosphere. In this paper, background music is defined as "classical light music without lyrics played by teachers for the purpose of auxiliary teaching in English class ".

2.2. Oral Accuracy

Accuracy refers to "conformity of the second language produced by learners with respect to the target language norm" [9].

"Oral accuracy" refers to the degree to which the language produced conforms to the standard of the target language, measured by the "error-free clause ratio"[9].

Zhang Wenzhong and Wu Xudong [10] defined language errors as a clear violation of grammatical rules or the use of words that are not acceptable in Standard English.

In this paper, Foster and Skehan's error-free clause ratio and Kong Wen's self-repair [11] rate are used to determine the accuracy of oral English. Error-free clause ratio refers to the percentage of clauses that completely conform to those grammatical rules of the target language in all clauses. The higher the percentage, the higher the accuracy. Self-repair [11] refers to the subsequent adjustment of learners' language behaviors according to their self-monitoring during the process of expression. Such adjustment includes not only the correction of the mistakes made, but also the addition, reduction and reorganization of the content of the expressed language. In determining the error clause in this paper, all syntactic errors, lexical errors, pronunciation errors and self-repair were included.

2.3. Oral Fluency

Domestic and foreign researchers have tried to define oral fluency from different aspects, of which some are representative: Hu Weijie [12] believed that fluency was a simple linguistic behavior phenomenon; Sajavaara [13] believed that while the second language learners express their ideas fluently and coherently, their language should also be acceptable. Skehan [14,15] believed that fluency was measured in 3 dimensions, namely, speed fluency, interrupted fluency, and repair fluency. Yu Hanjing [16] measured the repetition and self-repair of modified fluency more completely.

The paper adopted the following five time indicators put forward by Kong Wen [11] for testing oral fluency:

1. Speaking Rate (SR): is calculated by dividing the total number of syllables produced in a given speech sample by the amount of total time (including pause time), expressed in seconds, required to produce the speech sample. The resulting figure is normally then multiplied by sixty to given a figure expressed as syllables per minute.

2. Phonation/Time Rate (P/TR): gives the percentage of time spent speaking as a percentage proportion of the time taken to produce the speech sample.

3. Articulation Rate (AR): is calculated by dividing the total number of syllables produced by the amount of time taken to produce them, excluding pause time. It is expressed as the mean number of syllables produced per second over the total amount of time spent speaking during the speech sample.

4. Mean Length of Runs (MLR): is calculated as the mean number of syllables produced in utterances between pauses of 0.3 seconds and above, by dividing the total number of pauses of 0.3 seconds and above (initial and final excluded) by the total number of syllables produced in the speech sample.

5. Average Length of Pause (ALP), is calculated by dividing the total amount of pause time by total number of pauses.

3. Research Design

3.1. Participants

The participants in the paper were non-English major freshmen at Zhengzhou Electric Power Technology College. Two classes in the same grade at the same school were selected. Each class had 40 students, and the two classes had 80 students in all. The same teacher taught the two classes English, including listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teacher used the same teaching program, textbook, teaching plan and teaching activities. Class A adopted background music teaching while Class B adopted traditional teaching.

3.2. Research Thought

*"*Pretest——Experimental Teaching——Post-test" research design was adopted. Pretest was conducted in September 2020 (at the beginning of the term) and post-test was conducted in January 2021 (at the end of the term). During the experimental teaching, Class A (Experimental Group) received background music teaching while Class B (Control Group) received traditional teaching. Pretest and post-test were conducted by speech. In the two tests, these 80 students were asked to deliver a two-minute speech about the same topic "My Self-Introduction". As it is a familiar topic to students and everyone can say something about the topic, which can reflect students' real oral English level. The speeches on the two tests from the two classes were recorded and transcribed into written text materials for quantitative and qualitative analysis. At the first recording, the students did not know that they would deliver the same topic on the second recording. The students did not receive the same topic during the teaching time.

Practice effects have been minimized. The recording environment and equipment quality is good; the sound recording is clear. There is no any technical difficulty while transcribing the sound recording into written text materials. The background music is classical light music without lyrics.

3.3. Data Collection

The speeches made by these 80 students on the pretest and post-test were recorded. Before the speech on the pretest, the teacher gave students three minutes to prepare. The total recording time was about 140 minutes, with about 7280 words in all.

3.4. The Definition of Pause

Pause is a key concept which analyzes oral fluency and its development, as all the calculations of time indicator depend on the definition of pause. In the paper, the definition of pause from Liu Li [18] was used and he defined "a break of seconds or longer either within a sentence or between sentences".

4. Research Findings

4.1. Oral Accuracy

"Error-free clause ratio" and "self-repair rate" were used to analyze oral accuracy. According to data analysis, table 1 and table 2 showed the features of development of the students' oral English accuracy in this term.

4.1.1. The Results of Pretest

Let us look at the results of the pretest. Class A with 40 students received background music teaching; while Class B with 40 students received traditional teaching. Table 1 showed "error–free clause ratio" (EFCR for short) of Class A and B in the pretest.

SPSS software was used to calculate the average and difference of error-free clause ratio and standard deviation in the pretest of Class A and Class B in Table 1.

Table 1. *Average and Difference of EFCR of Class A and B in the Pretest.*

Class	Average EFCR	Standard Deviation
Class A	0.714	0.215
Class B	0.793	0.188

Table 1 shows that: in the pretest, the average of EFCR from Class A was 0.714, and standard deviation was 0.215; while the average of EFCR from Class B was 0.793, and standard deviation was 0.188. At the significance level of 0.1, there was a significant difference between Class A and Class B. Therefore, we can assume that the difference in post-test accuracy is mainly due to different teaching methods.

4.1.2. The Results of Post-test

Let us look at the results of post-test. Table 2 showed the results of EFCR of Class A and B in the post-test.

Table 2*.Average and Difference of EFCR of Class A and B in the Post-test.*

Class	Average EFCR	Standard Deviation
Class A	0.714	0.158
Class B	0.774	0.147

Table 2 shows: in the post-test, the average of EFCR from Class A was 0.714, and standard deviation was 0.158; while the average of EFCR from Class B was 0.774, and standard deviation was 0.147. At the significance level of 0.1, there was a significant difference between Class A and Class B. Table 1 and table 2 show: the average of EFCR from Class A (background music teaching) was 0.714 in the pretest and post-test respectively (pretest: 0.7136; post-test: 0.7138), which means the effect of background music teaching was not clear. As for Class B (traditional teaching), in the pretest, the average of EFCR was 0.793; in the post-test, the average of EFCR was 0.774. Therefore, we can assume that the differences in the post-test results are due to the different teaching methods adopted.

To make analysis more accurate, four types of errors (syntactic, lexical, pronunciation and self-repair) in the audio-recordings were counted. See Tables 3 and 4 for the statistics:

Table 3.*Percentage of the Four Types of Errors in the Pretest.*

Class	Syntactic Error	Lexical Error	Pronunciation Error	Self-Repair	Total
Class A	60 (24%)	24 (10%)	36 (14%)	129 (52%)	250
Class B	53 (34%)	19 (12%)	6 (4%)	79 (50%)	157

From Table 3, we can see: in the pretest, the total errors of Class A were 250, of which 60 were syntactic, taking up 10%; 36 were pronunciation errors, taking up 14%; 129 were self-repair times, taking up 52%. The total errors of Class B were 157, of which 53 were syntactic errors, taking up 34%; 19 were lexical errors, taking up 12%; 6 were pronunciation errors, taking up 4%; 79 were self-repair times, taking up 50%. The error number in Class A had 93 more errors than Class B. Both Class A and B reached 50% in self-repair rate, of which Class A had 50 more (2% more than Class B. The pronunciation accuracy of Class B was 10% higher than that of Class A, and the syntactic error rate of class B was 10% higher than that of class A. The lexical error of Class A was 2% lower than that of Class B.

Table 4. *Percentage of the Four Types of Errors in the Post-test.*

Class	Syntactic Error	Lexical Error	Pronunciation Error	Self-Repair	Total
Class A	62 (22%)	50 (18%)	33 (12%)	132 (48%)	277
Class B	54 (29%)	46 (24%)	14 (8%)	74 (39%)	188

From table 4, we can see: in the post-test, there was a decrease in the rate of syntactic errors in both classes, of which Class B decreased by 5% compared with the pretest, and Class A decreased by 2%. The pronunciation error rate of the two classes showed opposite trends: in the post-test, Class A decreased by 2% compared with the pretest while Class B increased by 4% compared with the pretest. In the

post-test, the pronunciation accuracy of Class B was still 4% higher than that of Class A.

Of the four types of errors, lexical errors and self-repair changed significantly. Lexical errors: The post-test of Class A and Class B was higher than the pretest of their respective classes. The number of Class A was 24 in the pretest and 50 in the post-test, increasing 26; the number of Class B was 19 in the pretest and 46 in the post-test, increasing 27. Self-repair: both Class A and Class B decreased respectively. The number of Class A was 129 in the pretest and 132 in the post-test, decreasing 4%; The number of Class B was 79 in the pretest and 74 in the post-test, decreasing 11%. The above statistics showed: background music teaching did not help to reduce lexical errors; it could help to reduce pronunciation errors; syntactic errors and self-repair. However, the decline in syntactic errors and self-repair was more significant in the post-test of traditional classes than that of background music teaching.

4.2. Oral Fluency

Five time indicators: speaking rate (SR), articulation rate (AR), phonation/time ratio (PTR), mean length of runs (MLR), average length of pause (ALP), were used to test students 'oral fluency.

4.2.1. Results of the Pretest

Firstly, Let's look at the results of the pretest. Table 5 shows the results of the five time indicators of Class A and Class B in the pretest.

Table 5. *Fluency Time Indicators of Class A and B in the Pretest*

Class	**SR (syl.)**	**AR (syl.)**	**P/TR (percent.)**	**MLR (syl.)**	**ALP (sec.)**
Class A	135.49	3.61	62	6.78	1.12
Class B	164.54	4.09	67	7.86	2.93
	0.011*	0.003**	0.185 n.s.	0.227 n.s.	0.000**

Note: 1.syl.=syllables; percent.=percentage; sec.=second.

2. P>0.05= Class A and B are not significantly different, n.s.=not significant; P<0.05= Class A and B are significantly different, * =significant; P<0.01= Class A and B are very significantly different, **= very significant.

Table 5 shows: in the pretest. Class A was better than Class B in average length of pause, Class A and Class B were very significant (P=0.000, P<0.01). Class B was better than Class A in speaking rate, articulation rate, phonation/time ratio and mean length of runs: Class B was 29.05 syllables more than Class A in speaking rate per minute, which was significant.

4.2.2. Results of the Post-test

Let's look at the results of the post-test. Table 6 shows the results of the five time indicators of Class A and Class B in the post-test.

Table 6. *Fluency Time Indicators of Class A and B in the Pretest.*

Class	SR (syl.)	AR (syl.)	P/TR (percent.)	MLR (syl.)	ALP (sec.)
Class A	142.46	3.55	66	7.43	3.18
Class B	174.52	4.04	71	10.89	0.90
	0.001 **	0.000 **	0.101 n.s.	0.008 **	0.000 **

Note: 1.syl.=syllables; percent.=percentage; sec.=second.

2. P>0.05= Class A and B are not significantly different, n.s. =not significant;
   P<0.05= Class A and B are significantly different, * =significant;
   P<0.01= Class A and B are very significantly different, **= very significant.

SR: The average of Class A was 142.26, lower than Class B (174.52), there was a statistically significant difference between the two classes. In the pretest, the average of Class A was 135.49, lower than Class B (164.54), the two classes were significant different. This shows that: after a term's background music teaching, the speaking rate of the two classes improved clearly. However, the average of speaking rate of Class A was not improved as fast as that of Class B.

AR: The average of Class A was 3.55, lower than Class B (4.04). There was very significant different between the two classes. This shows that: after a term's background music teaching, the average articulation rate of the two classes was lower than that of the pretest (Class A decreased 0.06; Class B decreased 0.05). The articulation rate of Class A was not as fast as Class B.

P/TR: The average of Class A was 66, lower than Class B (71). There was no significant difference between the two classes. In the pretest, the average of Class A was 62, lower than Class B (67). There was not significant different between the two classes. This shows that: after a term's background music teaching, the phonation/time ratio of Class A was less than that of Class B, and from being lower than that of Class B at the beginning of the semester.

MLR: The average of Class A was 7.43, lower than Class B (10.89), there was very significant different between the two classes. In the pretest, the average of Class A was 6.78, lower than Class B (7.86), there was very significant different between the two classes. This shows that: after a term's background music teaching, the mean length of run in Class A was shorter than that of Class B, and from being shorter than Class B at the beginning of the term.

ALP: The average of Class A was 3.18, longer than Class B (0.90), there was very significant different between the two classes. In the pretest, the average of Class A was 1.12, shorter than Class B (2.93), there was very significant different between the two classes. This shows that: after a term's background music teaching, the average length of pause of Class A became a bit longer than Class B, from being a little bit shorter than Class B at the begging of the term.

5. Discussions

From the results of the pretest and the post-test, we can see: background music teaching did not improve oral English accuracy obviously. Error-free clause ratio: results of Class A in the pretest and post-test were almost the same (0.714); results of Class B in the post-test were lower than that of the pretest. This shows that: background music teaching can facilitate students' oral English accuracy, but not very clear effect. Background music teaching can create a light atmosphere and relieve the pressure and anxiety [4]. There was no background music at the traditional teaching class, the pressure and anxiety were not relieved. Therefore, oral accuracy declined.

Let's look at the results of syntactic errors, lexical errors, pronunciation errors and self-repair in the pretest and post-test: in the post-test, the number of syntactic errors, pronunciation errors and self-repair of Class A declined obviously. However, the number of syntactic errors and self-repair of Class B declined more than that of Class A; the number of pronunciation errors of Class B in the post-test increased 8 (4%) more than in the pretest. In other words, traditional teaching was more helpful in promoting students' syntactic errors and self-repair in oral output, while background music teaching was more helpful in reducing the rate of pronunciation errors. However, the number of errors in the two classes was almost the same (Class A increased 26 and Class B increased 27). This shows that background music teaching had no help in reducing lexical errors. Background music had no significant effect on reducing syntactic error and self-repair. The reason may be that students' syntactic and self-repair were more vulnerable to the influence of background music, so that students could not concentrate on speaking more correct sentences. On the contrary, if students have a quiet environment to learn, they will speak oral English calmly, thus reducing the rate of syntactic errors and self-repair.

In terms of lexicon, the number of lexicon errors in the two classes increased almost uniformly. This shows that: after a term's study, the students expanded their vocabulary, but they were not proficient in the flexible use of these words, and background music could not help them to use these new words flexibly. In order to reduce the students' lexical error, it is necessary to strengthen lexical teaching, explain the differences between lexical synonyms and the use of fixed collocations. Let students use these words to make sentences and the teacher point out mistakes in time to ensure that students can use them correctly and skillfully.

As far as oral fluency is concerned, we can see from the results of pretest and post-test that: the post-test results of background music teaching were better than that of pretest, however, the traditional teaching was more significant than that of background music teaching. In the pretest, Class A was shorter than Class B in average length of pause. Class A lagged behind the Class B in speaking rate, articulation rate, phonation/time ratio and mean length of run. In the post-test, Class A in speaking rate, phonation/time ratio and mean length of run was higher than that of the pretest. However, Class B was much higher than Class A in these three aspects. Both Class A and Class B declined in articulation rate and the decline was almost the same. In average length of pause, Class A in the post-test became longer than in the pretest and far lagged behind Class B, while Class B surpassed Class A and got better than the pretest of Class A. In general, background music teaching could promote oral fluency, but it was far less advanced than traditional teaching.

In order to get more accurate research result, we made a questionnaire titled *The Impact of Background Music on Learning/Work*. Due to the new coronavirus epidemic, we use the network questionnaire by Wechat scan code going into the answer part. The participants included the students from Class A, with other participants from other universities and some employees. Questionnaires were handed out 130 and 107 were handed in. We analyzed and concluded the research findings as the following:

Question 1: Those who listen to music when study or work were 32, taking up 30%; sometimes listen to music when study or work were 62, taking up 58%; never listen to music were 13, taking up 12%.

Question 2: Those who could speak out the name of background music were 10, taking up 9%; those who could speak out some of the music were 84, taking up 79%; some could not speak out any background music were 13, taking up 12%. we can assume that: those who could speak out the name of background music were already influenced by the music; those who could speak out some of music were already influenced, when they heard unfamiliar music, they may be wonder or think about what music it

was. Therefore, they were also influenced. To sum up, those who were influenced by music were the sum of the first and the second options, that is 88%.

Question 3: Those who could hum all the music were 26, taking up 24%; those who could hum some of the music were 65, taking up 61%; those who could not hum any music were 16, taking up 15%. We can assume that: those who were influenced were the sum of the first and the second options, that is 83%.

Question 4: Those who could not finish the task with the background music were 13, taking up 12%; those who could finish the easy task with background music and could not finish hard task with background music were 49, taking up 46%; those who could finish any task with background music were 45, taking up 42%. We could assume that: those who were influenced were the sum of the first and the second options, that is 58%.

Question 5: Those who were influenced by background music were 20, taking up 19%; those who were sometimes influenced by background music were 50, taking up 47%; those who were never influenced by background music were 37, taking up 34%. We could assume that: those who were influenced were the sum of the first and the second options, that is 66%.

Question 6 is a subjective question: 93 people, 87% of participants believe that background music could bring positive effects; five, 5% were neutral; six, 5% thought it had negative effects. Three, 3%, did not do the question. Conclusion: the majority of people believed that background music was a positive factor, which improved work efficiency and did not affect people's study or work.

According to the 6 answers and analyses, objective facts and people's subjective concept were obviously inconsistent: people like to study or work in a comfortable environment with background music, but they do not know at all they were distracted by the background music when they were working or studying! The results further proved the previous data analyses: background music could distract people from work or study. This conclusion challenged the concept "background music is conducive to creating a good atmosphere, so that students can relax, overcome anxiety, generate a sense of pleasure, and achieve the maximum teaching effect" [5].

6. Conclusions

This paper examined the influence of background music teaching on the accuracy and fluency of non-English-major freshmen's oral English. The results show that: 1) The effect of background music teaching on students' oral accuracy was not obvious. Specifically, background music teaching did not help to reduce the lexical errors. Background music teaching could effectively help students reduce the pronunciation errors, syntactic errors and self-repair, but the traditional teaching in the syntactic errors and self-repair decreased more than background music teaching. The reason: students' syntactic and self-repair were more likely to be affected by background music, making them unable to concentrate on speaking more correct sentences. On the contrary, if students have a quiet learning environment, they will learn more input during the learning process and speak English freely in the post-test, thus reducing the rate of syntactic errors and self-repair. As for lexicon, background music could not make them think of and use unfamiliar words automatically and expertly. Instead, after they learn new words, they shall practice words again and again so that they could truly master the flexible use of lexicon. 2) Compared with traditional teaching, oral fluency of background music teaching was not improved as much as that of traditional teaching. Five indicators of oral fluency: speaking rate, articulation rate, phonation/time ratio, mean length of runs and average length of pause. The pretest and post-test of these five indicators showed different trends challenged the traditional idea that background music could achieve better teaching effect. Although background music might reduce pressure and relieve atmosphere, it could not help students to acquire more comprehensive input. Students need more quiet teaching environment and relevant module

exercises, especially the flexible use of vocabulary, so as to improve the accuracy and fluency of oral English to a greater extent. There are also some limitations about the paper: 1) The number of the participants is comparatively small. It is necessary to investigate different areas, different types of colleges and universities of non-English-major freshmen to compare the results of these investigation. 2） These participants are from two different majors, with different English level. It is hard to compare them and get exactly results. We should investigate several the same major students of the same grade to compare to get more accuracy and efficient results. 3) The test is about the participant's oral output on a topic, not real communication. The oral performance we observe is not exactly the same as their actual oral performance in real communication. Therefore, it is necessary to use real communicative language tasks, such as in the form of discussion or problem solving, to induce the oral output of the participants, so as to verify the findings of this study.

Appendix

A questionnaire from Part 5 Discussion

The Influence of Background Music on Learning/Work

1. Do you listen to music when you are studying or working? (Multiple choice * required)
   a. listen
   b. sometimes listen
   c. never listen
2. If background music is playing in your study or work place, can you speak out the name of music?(Multiple choice * required)
   a. can speak out all names of the music
   b. can speak out some of the music
   c. can not speak out anyone
3. Can you hum the melody of the background music while studying/working? (Multiple choice * required)
   a. can hum all music
   b. can hum some of the music
   c. can not hum any music
4. Can you complete tasks on time with background music playing?(Multiple choice * required)
   a. can not
   b. can finish easy tasks, can not finish hard tasks
   c. can
5. When you are studying or working, do your moods ebb and flow with background music? (Multiple choice * required)
   a. yes
   b. some music influence, some music do not influence
   c. never

What do you think of background music when you study or work ? (Positive and negative） No limit words. ds. There was no significant difference in the phonation/time ratio, and the change was the least. 3) This research result (Fill in the blanks * required answers)

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