

An Elementary Analysis on the Cultivation of College Students' English Learning Motivation

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Abstract

Learning motivation plays an important role in college students' English learning process and learning effectiveness. Based on the current situation of college students' English learning motivation, this article proposes from four aspects to help cultivate college students' English learning motivation, including learning objective, teaching method, teaching model and teacher-student relationship. It will provide a guidance for improving college students' English learning effectiveness.

Key words: College student; English; Learning motivation; Cultivate; English learning

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INTRODUCTION

English is a necessary tool for speeding up the process of globalization as well as the popularity of the Internet era. As college students have become the main force to promote social development, learning and mastering English has become a compulsory course. In recent years, English teaching and researches have developed rapidly, and the attention on improving English teaching effectiveness has become an imperative task. Intelligence, language ability, cognitive style, personality, learning strategy, motivation, age, gender and other factors are the

major factors to affect English teaching effectiveness. Some researchers have demonstrated that among a variety of factors affecting students' English learning, the role of motivation accounts for about 33% (Jakobovits, 1979, p.50), and learning motivation and learning outcome comprise a significant positive correlation (Li & Wu, 2007). Therefore, on the issue of promoting English teaching effectiveness, stimulating students' English learning motivation is particularly important. This article aims to discuss and analyze the current situation, influential factors and cultivation strategy of the contemporary college students' English learning motivation, in order to provide a guidance for improving the effectiveness of English teaching.

1. OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION

In psychology, motivation refers to the reason for driving human or animals to take a variety of behaviors. Learning motivation refers to the internal impetus which directly promotes students to learn. English learning motivation, as a social motivation, is a positive and conscious psychological state generated by English learners during learning process, and is a psychological motivation directly promoting the learners to learn in order to achieve a certain goal.

According to Gardner's theory (1972), English learning motivation can be classified into "integrative motivation" and "instrumental motivation." A large number of college students learn English because of interest or are affected by social factors. Integrative learning motivation can make students learn English culture in depth, and achieve a barrier-free communication with foreigners. Instrumental learning motivation, on the other hand, regards English as a common language of globalization and plays a crucial role for students' future employment and personal development.

Deci (1985) and other scholars classify learning motivation into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation from a perspective of cognitive psychology. Intrinsic motivation, by definition, is triggered from learners' internal demand and interest in learning English. For example, driven by the internal interest, some learners would regard English to have a unique charm, and would naturally have a strong thirst for the knowledge and spontaneously throw themselves into learning. They can acquire a great satisfaction and sense of accomplishment in the learning process, thereby maintain an enthusiasm and motivation for learning English. In addition, the need to achieve self-fulfillment and satisfaction is also an intrinsic motivation. External motivation is action driven by some external incentives to achieve an instrumental purpose. For example, in order to get an excellent result in test or obtain an employment, or be able to read English literature, a learner would learn English hard as a tool. Extrinsic motivation to some extent has a passive nature, because students are subject to external pressures to learn, and they consider English as a learning means to meet other purposes. Compared to extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is conducive to maintaining and stabilizing learning activities, while external motivation is just the opposite.

Brown believes that English learning motivation should be classified into global motivation, situation motivation and task motivation. Global motivation refers to the general attitude towards learning English; Situation motivation is inspired by good learning factors, such as teacher's character, teaching method and teaching content, etc.; Task motivation is arising from the task designed by the teacher. This classification also retains some problems. Firstly, the definition of global motivation is ambiguous and difficult to grasp. Secondly, this classification contains only teaching situation and learning task, but is irrelevant to the environmental factor, so may have many problems (Dai & Shu, 1994).

Biggs analyzed students' performances and found that students' learning motivation could be classified into the following aspects: Surface motivation, deep motivation and achievement motivation. Surface motivation refers to the learning motivated by coping with test or inspection. Deep motivation is the learning motivated by understanding and mastering knowledge. Achievement motivation refers to the learning in order to obtain a high achievement of self-realization.

2. CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION

Recently, a vast majority of college students have not been a correct style of study, have a lax learning discipline and take truancy. This is because their study foundation

is not solid, they don't know how to learn, have incorrect learning methods, and what's more important is the lack of motivation to learn. Learning motivation changes as the changes of social practice, education as well as different life experiences, and its specific characteristics are exhibited as the following.

2.1 Learning Motivations Are Complex and Diverse

Students have a wide range of English learning motivations: intrinsic interest motivation, personal development motivation, learning environment motivation, information media motivation, go abroad motivation and examine motivation, etc..

2.2 Learning Interest Is Low

Although college student English courses have been established for several decades, due to various pressures from schools and parents, some students have a resentment and slackness towards learning English. Their academic performances are always barely satisfactory, leading to a loss of confidence in learning English.

2.3 "Certificate Motivation" Is Stronger

China still takes examination as the only criterion to measure students' comprehensive abilities. Test score or certificate has become the only criterion of social assessment, which adds chips for test score to win in fierce competitions. Therefore, CET4, CET6, BEC and other examinations have become the major powers for students to learn English.

2.4 Application Ability Is Deficient

Due to the persistent pressure of exam-oriented education, even when students have passed the exams and obtained certificates, they can still only speak deaf English or dumb English, can not reach the needs of society or develop their abilities.

3. CULTIVATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION

Based on the features of college English teaching and learning, combined with the research results of previous studies, we propose the following suggestions to foster college students' English learning motivation.

3.1 Help Students Establish a Correct Learning Goal

In English teaching, teachers should pay attention to develop their teaching ability, strengthen the learning goal instead of the original purpose and consciously provide correct guidance to students, which can greatly stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning English. Passing CET4 and CET6 is only a periodical target which English teachers should help students achieve, then it should be based on students' personal qualities to help establish their

career goals and life goals. The analysis on “achievement motivation” can turn it into a more lasting intrinsic motivation, can enhance students’ motivation from the source and improve the learning outcomes. Only when students set a clear and achievable goal for themselves, they can make continuous efforts for it. According to the study of the psychologist Brown, students with excellent academical performances have all set up a learning objective, and retained a passion and progress for it; on the contrary, failure to establish a clear learning objective, a student’s performance would also be disappointing and lack an initiative to learn (Ibid.). In addition, the target of learning should be realistic, because a target set too high may make students lose confidence in learning, resulting an anxiety, fear, and heavy psychological burden; a low target, on the contrary, would be thought as lacking challenge, and be difficult to achieve personal values. Target can not only become a direction for more progress, but also play a catalytic role in learning. The task of establishing a correct English learning motivation falls on the shoulders of teachers so as to help realize dreams and achieve targets.

3.2 Flexibly Use a Variety of Teaching Methods

Interest is the intrinsic power for knowledge, and is the most active factor in learning motivations. Einstein once said, “Interest and hobby are the biggest driving forces.” With regard to teaching method, teachers can use a variety of means to promote students to take part in language activities, make them experience the joy of learning English, and enhance their interest in English. Deci and Ryan (1985) believe that, when students’ interests and hobbies have been stimulated, they can generate intrinsic motivations. Therefore, the cultivation of students’ English learning motivation should utilize a means that can stimulate interest and create fun.

Educational psychologists’ studies show that a new learning method is most likely to cause students’ attention. At present, multimedia teaching has been increasingly applied in classroom and well received by teachers. Multimedia has vivid, colorful images and large capacities, can make classroom full of interest and bring about more enthusiasm.

In classroom, teachers should create an environment to guide students to speak English. We should stimulate students’ enthusiasm for learning, relieve their psychology of being forced to learn, and encourage them to proactively seek ways to complete their studies. We should be fully understood that the knowledge of interest is held the fastest in mind, so that it’s particularly important for teachers to choose a teaching subject closely related to life. For example, if we organize discussions on the current domestic and international news and hot issues, introduce appropriate network terms, it will greatly stimulate students’ motivation to learn English.

Teachers should also invite more foreign teachers into the classroom, and provide students with the opportunities to communicate, such as establishing English corner to provide a good language environment so as to stimulate students’ intrinsic motivation, improve teaching quality and effectiveness.

3.3 Change Teaching Idea, Establish a Student-Centered Teaching Mode

In English teaching in the past, teachers substantially carried out indoctrination. This mode is only conducive to the completion of teaching process, but is not conducive to inspiring active learning. Therefore, teachers should play a guiding role and focus on fostering students’ independent learning, avoid cramming teaching but create a wide thinking space for students. Teachers play an important leading role in promoting students to be proactive and developing a plan of study, making them integrate extracurricular and curricular learning dynamically, and clarify learning objectives. Student-centered teaching means to abandon the teaching method of “teacher’s monologue”, mobilize students’ independent learning in accordance with course requirements, encourage them to positively participate in activities by applying theory into practice, and help them generate a sense of ownership and a sense of self-control to inspire motivation. JBCarroll, the famous American psychologist, believes that in English learning, teachers should carry out teaching activities in a student-centered mode, pay attention to develop students’ interests, experiences and skills so as to learn English actively and creatively. Therefore, in order to stimulate students’ learning and improve teaching effectiveness, we must create a lively atmosphere and flexible context in classroom, and try to change the focus from teachers’ “teaching” to students’ “learning”.

3.4 Build a Harmonious Teacher-Student Relationship

Teacher-student relationship has been acknowledged to transmit wisdom, impart knowledge, and resolve doubts down the ages. This stereotyped teacher-student relationship is not conducive to the development of students’ learning initiative, and hinders the development of their creative ability and imagination ability. Being student-centered and understanding individual differences is a fundamental requirement of modern educational theory. As Corder said: “We can not actually ‘teach’ students a foreign language, but only create a suitable language learning environment for them”. Creating a good classroom atmosphere, protecting students’ learning motivation is the responsibility of every teacher. Contemporary educationalists all agree that teachers and students should maintain a relationship of equality with mutual caring, trust and support, and should create a safe, tolerable and favorable learning

atmosphere for students' development. Teachers should not pay too much attention to learning outcomes, but lay emphasis on the learning process and learning tasks, making students reduce concerns and maintain a good attitude. By doing this, students can have the courage and confidence to speak English freely, take the initiative to participate in creative foreign language exchanges, make full use of what they have learned to acquire a sense of accomplishment, and complete the cultivation of intrinsic motivation.

In general, motivation is one of the important factors that affect students' learning outcomes. In the process of learning English, we should attach importance to a variety of motives to promote students, so the intelligence factor and all internal and external factors can reinforce each other. Therefore, English learning motivation is an important project. Then how college teachers can foster and inspire students' learning

motivation in the teaching practice is an eternal task that we must continue to explore.

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