



## The Influence of English Teaching in Big-Classess to Students' Study Motivation

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### Abstract

With the implementation of the enrollment expansion of colleges and universities, University English teaching has to be carried out in big class to meet the need of university enrollment expansion. The big-class teaching style could also solve the declined teacher-student ratio effectively. This paper aims to explore the effects of big-class English Teaching to students' English learning motivation by collecting relevant data through the questionnaire survey, statistical analysis and comparison. Finally, a conclusion that in big class, English teaching model will bring positive effect to students' English learning motivation will be reached. Data show that learners in big classes have developed stronger learning motivation than students in small classes. A better cooperation and exchanges in big classes will contribute to enhance the English learning motivation.

**Key words:** Big class; College English; Learning motivation; influence

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### INTRODUCTION

As a foreign language learning motivation research pioneer, Gardner first proposed the definition of motivation in foreign language learning: Learning Motivation promotes the pursuit of learners' own desire

or satisfaction from language learning and their good and positive attitude towards target language learning. As a type of learning motivation, English learning motivation is also a psychological process, including two factors: the need of learning English and external cause (works as a trigger). The needs of English learning are the basis for generation of English learning motivation, which can stimulate learners' English learning activities as the internal driving force. When the learners have a clear English learning motivation, then under the influence of stimulus, English learning needs can be converted to the learning motivation, so that learners will make corresponding English learning activities. As Gorder once said: if given motivation, anyone can learn a language. Therefore, the English learning motivation plays a decisive role in foreign language learning.

Learners are from certain motivation to stimulate any learning activities and use them to achieve a goal. The influence factors include intelligence factors and non intelligence factors. Learning motivation belongs to the category of non intelligence factors; it is one of the most dynamic factors which influence learning activities. Language learning motivation belongs to learning motivation. As it belongs to the category, it shares similarities with other learning motivation but also has its own unique characteristics. The domestic and foreign researchers studied language learning motivation of English and achieved fruitful research. They put forward a lot of language learning motivation theories and models. In recent twenty years, domestic scholars have studied Chinese students' English learning motivations. The results of the study indicate that, English learning motivation plays an important role in English learning activities. The results of these studies can not only help the teachers to understand the psychological process of English learning, more important thing is, it can help us to explore new teaching methods to stimulate students' learning of English,

## 1. THE NECESSITY OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN BIG CLASSES

Since the beginning of the late ninety's of the last century, a policy developed by China's Ministry of Education aimed at rejuvenating the country through science and education and improving the national quality gradually. It carried out the enrollment expansion of colleges and universities. Data shows, in 1999, that's the first year of enrollment expansion of colleges and universities, the national undergraduate enrollment was 1596800, compared to 1083600 in 1998, an increase of 513200 (www.moe.edu.cn). In accordance with the deployment of the Ministry of education, enrollment of undergraduate students will be at an annual rate of 8% increase year by year. To 2020, it can be predicted that the number of university students in China will reach 40000000.

The first problem of Enrollment Expansion Policy leads to the lack of infrastructure and education quality decline. In the north of China, for example, in 1999, the university enrollment expansion has led to the tight dormitory; some students need to solve the accommodation problem independently. In 2002, Beijing City Board of education conducted a survey of 50 colleges and universities and they found that 65% of the schools are lack of teachers so there is no ability to continue to expand. Furthermore, 86% schools were confronted with hardware problems and shortage of funds.

At the same time, the lack of teachers led to a sharp decline in the quality of teaching in schools, taking Hunan as an example, from 1998 to 2005, the number of college students increased by 4.2 times, and the number of teachers only increased by 2.1 times. The rate of teachers' growth lagged behind the rapid expansion of students but if more teachers are employed may influence the quality of teachers.

An inevitable consequence of the enrollment expansion of colleges and universities is the teacher-student ratio dropped significantly, resulting in expansion of the class scale. As college English is a required course of colleges and universities, the expansion of class size is inevitable. In the case of China West Normal University, one college English class covers 60-68 students. According to the education experts of British Lancaster University and University of Leeds in 1989, a class which covers 50 or above students is defined as big class. There is a considerable number of Colleges English class can be defined as big classes. Since a big class of English teaching has become a trend and will develop into universally potential, it's quite necessary and inevitable to study it as a subject in the field of English education and teaching method.

## 2. COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING MODE IN BIG CLASS

In college English teaching activities, class consisting of 50 or more learners can effectively solve the declined teacher-student ratio, which is the result of enrollment expansion of colleges and universities. Ur believes that big-class teaching mode has the following advantages:

### 2.1 Affluent Human Resources

There are more students composed in big class, which can provide more human resources. Learners from different living environment and education background can share different life experience, knowledge structure and diverse hobbies. Learners enhance understanding in the teaching activities. They will learn from each other about the experience of life in the acquisition of language, which definitely plays a positive role in promoting individual studying motivation. Big class is also more likely to reflect diverse ideas, open-mindedness, to learn widely from others' strength. These features are helpful for carrying out classroom interactive activities.

### 2.2 Cultivating Learners Ability to Accept Difference

Big class holds more learners, which means diverse personalities and values. The individual learners get the understanding of the peers through the contact. They are to be aware of the differences between people, to deepen the understanding of human nature, to enhance the ability of tolerance and understanding. So, they put aside minor differences so as to seek common ground.

### 2.3 Good and Active Learning Interaction

English Teaching in big class would urge English teachers to take more flexible and student-centered teaching mode and to carry on the teaching reform. One of the most important innovations is to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability, to create more opportunities to make the student to strengthen the cooperation and mutual assistance. Greater potential release of learners will make the English teaching more challenging, having-fun and cooperation.

## 3. A SURVEY ON THE EFFECT OF THE BIG-CLASS TEACHING TO ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION

The survey is conducted on a total of 344 undergraduate students in China West Normal University as the research object, using the questionnaire to gather data and then do some analysis and contrast. Information about Subjects can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**English Learning Motivation Questionnaire of Undergraduates in 2012-2014**

Department grade, class	Number of students	Department grade, class	Number of students
Chinese ,one,B2	41	Chinese,one,B3	61
Chemistry,one,B1	42	Chemistry,one,B2	63
Math, one,B4	33	Math, one, B5	54
Education,one,A1	31	Education,one,A2	58

Questionnaire is about English learning motivation scale. The form of dichotomy by Gardner is used to measure. A total of 15 multiple-choice questions representing English learning motivation. Each choice clearly describes the motivation of English learning from

different aspects from the intrinsic interest, learning achievement, self development, studying overseas demand, peer pressure and information media, the six dimensions and the numbers of questions are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**The Questionnaire of Dimension Table**

Motivations	Meanings of motivations	Question numbers
Intrinsic interest	Cultural understanding intentions and preferences of English language	1.3.15
Learning achievement	Meet the need of good scores, Cet4/6 and good work offers	8.9.12
Self development	Improve one's ability	7.11
Studying overseas	For the desire of study abroad	4.10
Peer pressure	Developing self competitiveness in a society	2.5.14
Information media	Attainment of information via languages	6.13

**3.1 Empirical Study on students' English learning motivation in small class**

The survey analyzes the descriptive statistics of students' English learning motivation in small class. The data are in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Data of Students' English Learning Motivation in Small Class**

Motivations	Average	Variance	Ranking
Intrinsic interest	4.1216	1.5103	5
Learning achievement	4.8515	1.3117	1
Self development	4.8317	1.3276	2
Studying overseas	4.0314	1.6213	6
Peer pressure	4.3421	1.4114	4
Information media	4.4752	1.3319	3

As shown in Table 3, the main purpose of English learners in small class is to get high scores in English test, CET4/6 certificates or graduation diploma. Study for scores is ranked first in all variables, which is in accordance with many previous research data. The variable of self development is at the second place in students' English learning motivation. It apparently cannot be underestimated. One of the main purposes of the majority of students in learning English is to find a job or attain promotion in the future. The majority of students are inclined to enhance their competitiveness in the workplace by studying English. Generally speaking, in small class of English learning students' motivation is mainly from the external pressure, the purpose of

learning English is like the use of a tool or skill. They are strongly purposed. In contrast to the high place of external motivations, students' intrinsic motivations are low. The average value of spontaneous intrinsic interest variable is low and the data reflect the college students' English learning lack of enthusiasm. Students hold negative attitude toward integration into culture and social life of the target language, and some of them even showed the trend of burnout and exhaust in English learning.

**3.2 Empirical Study on Students' English Learning Motivation in Small Class**

The survey analyzes the descriptive statistics of students' English learning motivation in big class. The data are in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Data of Students' English Learning Motivation In Big Class**

Motivations	Average	Variance	Ranking
Intrinsic interest	4.6513	1.3812	3
Learning achievement	4.8615	1.3201	1
Self development	4.8237	1.3775	2
Studying overseas	4.0625	1.6104	6
Peer pressure	4.6421	1.3958	4
Information media	4.3212	1.5405	5

As shown in Table 4, English learning of the students is still mainly for examination in big class. They study College English mainly for high scores of final examinations, CET 4 or CET 6 and graduation diploma.

Score or grade motivation is still ranked first in all. It also reflects another aspect of English learning in China. Most learners are studying for tests, all kinds of tests. In our country, the examination has oriented education mode. To study in a good school, to be admitted to the University, to graduate from University, to study abroad, even to find a desirable job which requires students to achieve a certain level in English. Learners will put a lot of energy and effort in English learning in a period of time, but the effort is not persistent. Once learning goals being achieved, learners will relax and think the studying of English finally attains the top of the mountain. In consequences, it is exceptionally difficult to continue their study. And obviously, they are unlikely to achieve further development in the study of English. It is noteworthy that students' English learning motivation of intrinsic interest variable average in big classes are higher than those of students in small classes by analyzing the data from survey.

We also can find that there is an increase of ranking from the position of fifth to third in terms of interest variables average in big classes in contrast to that in small classes. Students' intrinsic motivation of English learning has been enhanced. More Learners in big classes want to know the English itself, cultures and conventions of English speaking countries, that is, their interest about Western social life and culture has been greatly increased. Research has indicated that enhancing the intrinsic interest is vital to learning the target language and it is the driving force for learners' language study. In the meantime, the learners with strong interest and desire are more likely to get the key factors of successful language learning.

Learners in big classes have stronger desire to improve their English level to obtain greater learning achievement and inner satisfaction. The enhancement of the intrinsic motivation in the mind of learners will make them fulfill continuous efforts in English learning process in the future. As a result, they are more likely to obtain long-term progress in English learning. On the other hand, the pressure of peers as an extrinsic motivation has greatly increased in big classes. This change reflected the changes in the English teaching mode in big classes, which made more student-centered teaching activities be involved and enable students to participate in the studying activities as members of a group. Students have more opportunities to communicate and cooperate with their partners or other members of a group. More cooperation and mutual assistance also increases peer encouragement, positive competition and help, which can promote learners to get stronger and more lasting driving force in college English acquisition. Enhanced initiative in will make better learning effect; as a consequence, a virtuous cycle of English studying can be attained.

#### 4. STRATEGIES USED IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN BIG CLASS

Foreign language teaching is a bilateral activity. Without consideration of the needs of students, the organization of teaching is meaningless. Only under the appropriate guidance of the teacher, the efficiency of teaching activities will be the highest. Genetic epistemology and teaching interaction theory developed by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget agreed whether the purpose of teaching can be achieved depends on the teachers leading role and students' interaction as main body." Teachers should effectively organize student-centered classroom activities and make it to be lively and vivid. Teachers should be careful enough to find students' difficulties to peace their anxiety. Language teachers play the roles of students' learning guide.

Students-centered learning means the fact that the language teachers organized the teaching activities which put students as the main body to meet their learning needs and to develop students' ability to use language. In big-class teaching, in order to facilitate the participation of students, the teaching method can be adjusted as follows.

The organization of teaching activities should be in accordance with the actual situation of College English Teaching which asks to break up the whole into parts. By doing this can effectively avoid the negative impact of a large number of big class teaching. The particular solution is that a teacher divided students into several groups to fulfill different English activities, namely, the class is subdivided into several smaller groups. Then, teachers give the guidance one group after another. The guidance is based on the common characteristics of team members help them finish teaching or learning tasks to complete the layout. When choosing team members, teachers should reflect the average level of English assignment. The task assigned to every student is temporary rather than permanent for its purpose is to facilitate the teaching better, promote better co-operations and communication among the students and teachers.

#### CONCLUSION

According to the requirements of college English curriculum was revised in 2007, the teaching objectives is cultivation of students' comprehensive ability of using English, especially listening and speaking ability, and make the students be able to communicate in English in the future either in work or social interactions. This puts forward higher request to the college English curriculum from the original target of oriented examination into the cultivation of students' English ability. In order to meet the higher requirements on the quality of college English

teaching, the quality of English class should be improved which isn't a contradiction to the implementation of the expansion of colleges and universities enrollment. On the contrary, the reform of college English teaching mode in big class will be necessary to produce a positive effect on English learning motivation and can make learners attain more effective, more lasting advances in English learning.

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