

A Study on the Relationship between English Learning Motivation and Learning Effect

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Abstract: In order to explore the relationship between college students' English learning motivation and learning effect, this paper uses a questionnaire survey to investigate and analyze the English classroom learning motivation of first-year non-English majors. Based on the final English score, the paper analyzes the correlation between English learning motivation and learning effect.

Keywords: English; Learning motivation; Learning effect; Learning attitude

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1. Introduction

Humanistic learning psychology believes that learning is the process of developing potential and realizing oneself. The learning of any knowledge requires interest, which is the factor that stimulates learning motivation and promotes learners to study hard. Therefore, motivation is considered to be the inner motivation that directly drives learners to learn. Under certain conditions, motivation and external factors coordinate and stimulate students' learning enthusiasm, and exert an important impact on students' English learning process.

Motivation is generally regarded as an internal motivation, an emotional effect, and a desire to motivate people to take action ^[1]. The learning motivation of learners can be divided into integrated motivation and instrumental motivation. The former aims to master and understand more about the target language and corresponding culture from the language learning activity itself, while the latter mainly uses language learning as a means to achieve certain goals, such as passing examinations and obtaining further learning opportunities. Cognitive psychologists divide learning motivation into external motivation and internal motivation ^[2]. External motivation is when an action is taken for the sole purpose of obtaining something other than the action. If the individual is interested in the learning process itself, learning in order to get satisfaction from the behavior, then this motivation is internal motivation ^[3]. In addition, there are task-based motivation and situational motivation. Most of the empirical studies on foreign language learning motivation in China follow Gardner's classical and extended model to explore the role of motivation in promoting learning results and the relationship between motivation and other learner factors that affect achievement ^[4]. The research shows that learning motivation

has a significant positive impact on the frequency of students' use of learning strategies. Therefore, this paper investigates how learning motivation affects learning effect among non-English major college students.

2. Research subjects and methods

2.1. Research subjects

This survey was conducted by random sampling of first-year non-English major college students. There were 135 students in total, of whom 98 were male students and 37 were female students.

2.2. Research methods

The questionnaire survey method was used in this study. Based on the questionnaire designed by previous research and combined with the characteristics of college students in the region at this stage, a questionnaire on College Students' English Learning Motivation and Learning Attitude was formed^[5]. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first part was the personal information of the subjects, including gender, major, type of school before entering college, and final grades. The second part investigated learning motivation. In addition, the questionnaire adopted a five-point Likert scale. A total of 135 questionnaires were issued, all of which were recovered and valid. In order to maintain the accuracy of the data, the method of interview was also adopted for some students. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS14.0 statistical software.

3. Results

3.1. Instrumental motivation

The statistical results showed that the instrumental motivation of most first-year students in learning foreign languages is not particularly obvious. From the perspective of the two different attitudes, the proportion of "learning English is a compulsory course stipulated by the school," "learning English is a symbol of ability and knowledge," "learning English is to pass CET-4 and CET-6," and "learning English is to apply for graduate school in the future or to create a career abroad" is basically the same; while 58.5% of students agreed with "learning English is to find a good job after graduation," indicating that nearly 58.5% of the students linked the study of foreign language with their future careers.

3.2. Integration motivation

According to the statistics, 46.4% of students said they liked learning English, 49.6% said they were interested in English-speaking countries, and 50.4% said they wanted to know more about the customs of English-speaking countries. 60.7% of the students said they wanted to continue to study CET-6 after learning CET-4, indicating that most of the students took the initiative to further improve their English learning ability.

3.3. Relationship between instrumental motivation and integration motivation

There are differences between instrumental motivation and integration motivation among non-English major freshmen. As shown in **Table 1**, there is a highly significant difference between instrumental motivation and integration motivation.

Table 1. Comparison between instrumental motivation and integration motivation of college students

| Types of motivation | Mean | Standard deviation | <i>t</i> | <i>P</i> |
|-------------------------|------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Instrumental motivation | 3.44 | 0.69 | 4.43 | 0.000 |
| Integration motivation | 3.08 | 0.68 | | |

3.4. Learning attitude

Some scholars also regard learning attitudes as internal motivations. The statistical results showed that the percentage of students who completely disagree and disagree with the five options of learning attitude is significantly greater than the percentage of students who agree and completely agree, that is, most students have a correct attitude towards learning English. However, it is worth noting that nearly 30% of students had a general attitude among the five options.

3.5. Relationship between foreign language learning motivation, attitude, and learning effectiveness

Some studies suggest that the motivation of foreign language learning greatly affects the learning results. Here, the students' final English scores of this semester were used to express the learning effect. It should be noted that the final score is composed of three parts: regular score (20%), midterm score (10%), and final score (70%). The assessment of regular scores is mainly based on comprehensive factors such as students' attendance, regular performance, and homework in the half semester, which essentially includes the components of students' learning attitude and motivation, so it has high credibility. As shown in **Table 2**, there is a significant positive correlation between foreign language learning attitude and learning effectiveness, that is, the stronger the motivational attitude, the better the academic performance.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients of English learning motivation, attitude, and learning effect

| Variables | Mean | Correlation coefficient | <i>P</i> |
|-------------------|------|-------------------------|----------|
| Final grade | 76.4 | 0.378*** | 0.000 |
| Learning attitude | 3.5 | | |

3.6. English learning motivation and classroom teaching

According to the results of this survey, "foreign language teachers like to teach me" accounted for 68.9%, indicating that the teacher's knowledge and personal charm deeply attracted students. It is worth noting that nearly half or even more than half of the students held a general attitude toward the options of "English textbook content attracts me" and "I like the atmosphere in English class." As presented in **Table 3**, there is a significant positive correlation between objective factors and integration motivation, that is, in the entire teaching activity, teachers, classroom environment, and teaching materials all have an important impact on the long-term development of students' foreign language learning.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between objective factors and integration motivation of college students in foreign language learning

| Variables | Mean | Correlation coefficient | <i>P</i> |
|------------------------|------|-------------------------|----------|
| Objective factor | 3.43 | 0.357*** | 0.000 |
| Integration motivation | 3.43 | | |

4. Discussion

4.1. Key points

- (1) First-year non-English major college students have obvious motivation for foreign language learning.
- (2) The instrumental motivation of most first-year college freshmen to learn foreign languages is not particularly obvious. Foreign language teachers should not only support and encourage students with this motivation but also provide appropriate guidance to enhance their interest in the foreign language itself.
- (3) Compared with instrumental motivation, college freshmen's integrative motivation is stronger. Therefore, teachers should seize the opportunity to increase oral and listening training and the introduction of cultural background knowledge of the target country inside and outside the classroom to increase students' strong thirst for knowledge.
- (4) There are obvious differences between instrumental motivation and integration motivation. However, it was found that some students with strong motivation are not only interested in the English language but also have a good desire to learn English well.
- (5) Most first-year non-English major students have a positive attitude towards learning foreign languages.
- (6) Learning motivation, attitude, and learning effectiveness are closely related and interact with each other. Strong motivation and attitude can indeed stimulate learning and improve performance; and good grades, in turn, can enhance learning motivation and further correct learning attitudes.
- (7) The objective factors of foreign language teaching play a positive role in promoting students' integrative motivation. This puts forward higher requirements for the compilation of teaching materials and the quality of teachers themselves.

4.2. Policies

First of all, we should stimulate students' learning motivation. In the process of culture introduction, foreign language teachers should follow the principles of practicability, stage, and suitability. Students' cross-cultural awareness is cultivated by introducing cultural customs, words and stories, historical facts, relevant background knowledge, etc. in order to stimulate the motivation of students to learn English. We should also set long-term learning goals. After entering the university, most students think that it is time to relax their studies and fully "enjoy" the colorful college life. They do not study as hard as they did in high school. Therefore, it is necessary to set long-term learning goals and encourage them to work hard.

Second, we need to strengthen language input and output. Chinese students learning foreign languages in a Chinese environment primarily rely on classroom teaching, which is a conscious and formal approach to language learning. According to second language acquisition theory, language input is crucial, as inadequate input can hinder the ability to produce language output. To overcome this, students should actively seek out additional learning resources, and engage more with listening and reading to increase their language input. After accumulating sufficient input, it is essential to focus on strengthening language output. Cultivating language communicative competence requires learners to internalize the language naturally through extensive practical communication activities. Students should be provided with ample opportunities to use the target language directly, immersing themselves in environments where the language is spoken, engaging in meaningful communication, and participating in problem-solving and task-completion activities.

Finally, students can make full use of the multimedia computer room and English self-learning classroom for self-study in their spare time. According to their English level and hobbies, reasonable arrangement of activity content and learning progress is conducive to personalized development. Students can also actively participate in English speech competitions, English song competitions, English short play competitions, classic

English film dubbing competitions, etc., so that they have more opportunities to communicate and learn from each other, and fully stimulate their desire for acting and interest in English learning. Additionally, they can selectively watch American and British dramas and actively exchange their impressions, which is beneficial to improve the English learning effect of college students.

5. Conclusion

In a word, motivation is one of the most important non-intellectual factors that affect the learning effect, the subjective reason that stimulates people's actions, and the internal motivation of people's actions. In English learning, college students should constantly produce learning motivation, developing it in harmony with their intelligence factors and transforming it into persistent learning motivation, so as to effectively improve the English learning effect.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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