



On the Motivation and the English Achievement in the Senior Middle School

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Abstract

Motivation is one of the important factors that influence English learning achievement. That's true of the students in the Senior Middle School. In order to improve the students' English performance, a research by means of a questionnaire and an interview is done in a key Senior School on the motivation in learning English in order to improve the English teaching. The results showed that the motivation has a close relationship with the students' performance. But the different strength in motivation will lead to different learning efficiency. So to help the students to maintain a proper strength in English learning motivation is very necessary for the teachers in the daily teaching procedure. Finally, some suggestions are available to the teachers.

Keywords: Motivation, English learning performance, Senior middle school

I. Introduction

As we all know, motivation is one of the most important factors that will influence students' English achievements or Performance. It has a close relationship with students' success or failure in English teaching in the Senior Middle School. Therefore, Teachers must pay more attention to this aspect. As Gardner (1985) emphasized that the motivation constructed the primary factor to influence students on English learning.. He believed that motivation for language learning can not only include goal orientation but the combination of effort, desire to achieve the goal of learning the language and favorable attitudes toward learning the language. And the core of his motivation is the dichotomy of integrative and instrumental orientations. (Zhang Suyan, 20)There exists a great dispute about the effect of the kinds of motivation on the English study performance. Lukmani discovered that the learners with instrumental orientations will be easily successful in English Learning than those with integrative motivation. Similarly Lzzo discovered in his survey that students with instrumental motivation will make great success in foreign language learning. But Burstall discovered that those two motivations have been paralleled connected with the success of a foreign language study closely, unable to distinguish which effect is more or less. Gardner gives a great impetus to the motivation theory development. On the base of him, Graham divided the motivation into integrative motivation and assimilative motivation. (Zhao Ju, 2003, 12).

However not all researchers in the world agree with Gardner's theory. Hungarian psychologist Dornyei brought forward three-level mode: language level; learner level and situation level. Language level includes the motivity every part of language produced on the learners; Learner language means the features of individual difference, among which the most important is the need for success and maintenance of the learners' self-esteem; the situation level are those factors including the impetuses by teachers and group. Differently Brown divided the motivations into three types: global motivation, situational motivation, task motivation. (Zhaoju, 2003, 12). Besides there are other different voices on this subject at home .Wen Qiufang (1996, 174) explained motivation as the reason for studying English and the aim of learning English. She divided the motivation of learning English into two groups: surface motive and deep motive.

People with surface motive tend to get a degree, a good job or a higher pay; people with deep motive tend to study English for great interest and for extension of their knowledge. In her research, she finds out to know about one's own motivation type will do good to further study. In this article, the theory outline mainly comes from Wen Qiufang (1996).

The author intends to make a research on the English learning motivation in a Senior Middle school, which is one of the three key senior middle schools in a little city, or rather, the third one in the quality of the students' performance. Many students come from the countryside with a poor foundation and little interest in English. A number of students have not their own goals in English learning, just following the teacher blindly. Seemly they are forced to do that. They do not know how to learn English well. As a result, we can imagine what their English performances are like. In order to narrow down the gap between the school and the other two key schools, the headmaster encourage the author to do a research on this problem, hoping to find out the reason for that and to solve the serious problem, making students learning English actively and efficiently finally.

2. Research design and data collection

2.1 Subjects

The subjects in this survey are the students in three different classes from the three grades randomly. The total number is 180. The reason why I choose subjects in this way is that the survey is intended to get overall information on motivation of the students in the school in order to get valid information from a big sample. The large sample can to a certain extent make sure the validity of the research.

2.2 Research instruments

The instruments used in the study were one questionnaire (for the students) and eight guide questions for the students interview. The questionnaire is made according to Wen Qiufang. This questionnaire is made up of ten questions, which are all translated into simple English. Each questions have five choices marked with the score value: "1,2, 3,4, 5" to represent the different meanings: 1. This sentence is never true of me or almost never true of me. 2. This sentence is seldom true of me. 3. This sentence is sometimes true of me. 4. This sentence is usually true of me. 5. This sentence is always true of me. It's not difficult for the senior students to understand

2.3 Procedures for data analysis

2.3.1 Questionnaire

Choose a suitable day when students have enough time to cooperate with the questionnaire. Before they do, the requirements must be made clearly enough to all the students. After collecting the information from the subjects, the data were input into the computer. By means of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), we can draw some information about the students' response to each question. Judging from the mean of each question used by students, we can know how forceful they are in motivation. We can also calculate the correlation between the motivation and English performance. Then according to the statistics theory, we can look into the inner relationships between the motivation and the students' English performance.

3. Type of data

According to the questionnaire, we can get two kinds of students: students with super-motive and deep motive. If the questions from number 1 to number 5 can add up to a score from 17-25, and the scores of the questions from number 6 to number 10 can have a total mark from 5-16, we can conclude that the student's motivation is mainly surface motivation. On the other hand, if we got a rough mark between 5-16 from the question 1 to question 5, or a mark about 17-25 from the question 6 to question 10, we can judge that the student have a deep motive. And then, we can make a form showing the correlation relationship between the motivation type and the English performance and also the relationship between each question about the correlation and the English performance.

On the other hand, an interview was made among those classes the subjects are from. The number is about 18, and the English performance had better are in different score distribution: two top, two middling, two bottom students in each class. During the interview, the subjects are asked to answer the following questions concerning their motivation in learning English:

1. How are your feelings about your English learning?
2. How do you think of the English learning?
3. Do you adjust to the English teaching now?
4. Why do you study English?
5. What obstacles do you have when you study English? How do you deal with them?
6. Do you like English? Why?
7. Do you like the teaching now?

8. How do you look at the function of interest in your study?

The above questions are some open questions. From those questions, the inner world of the students can be look into. Combined with the results from the questionnaire, we can make sure the validity of the research.

4. Type of analysis

When analyzing the questionnaire with the help of the SPSS, the author is doing a kind of quantitative analysis; while using the interview, the author is doing qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis are combined here to enhance the validity of the research. The interview can help the research find out the truth behind their choices. In qualitative analysis, the researcher can base his or her interpretation or conclusion on the daily observation.

5. Results and discussion

If the results show that the students are mainly super-motive oriented, this means they are in a state of being forced to study. Some of those students usually are lack of activity and direct interest when studying English. Though they have some indirect interest, it cannot support them for further studies with higher difficulty. Combined with the information from those students with super motive, the truth can be found: Not all the students feel uninterested in the English from the very beginning but lose the interest as the difficulty in English learning increases because of lack of enough perseverance. Others become frustrated when they can't make progress in English learning. If so, they may be in hot water and hard to throw off it.

If the results show that the students are type of deep-motive, those students must have very deep interest in what they learn. Interest has two kinds of classifications: direct and indirect interest. The former is caused by the learning course and the knowledge. The latter is decided by the students' cognition in the learning activities .If students are lack of direct interest, studies will become a kind of burden, boring and dull; if they have no indirect interest, they will be easy to lose heart and perseverance in the English. But those students should keep up this motivation in case it changes into surface one. They should monitor the changes so as to make any adjustment. From the above survey, we can also draw a conclusion that motivation and learning strategies can supplement to each other.

6. Suggestions

Teachers should try their best to stimulate students' enthusiasm in learning English in order to improve teaching efficiency. How can teachers do when they teach students English? Several suggestions are available: to help students realize the significance of English in the world and the value of learning English; to provide all kinds of opportunities for students, making each student experience the pleasure from the success in learning English so as to set up self-respect and self-confidence; to change teaching methods and styles according to the interest and the learning contents of students; to try to put the contents students learn from the English books into real contexts; to clear the atmosphere of anxiety in learning English and support and comfort students when they fall into learning disorder . The most important is to make friends with your students and to understand, encourage, make allowances for the students by all means.

As for students, a best choice for them is to follow the instructions and the suggestions when they study, and they had better adjust their cognition, strategies to their studies.

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