Influence on English Learning Attitudes Towards Minority College Students

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Abstract: Any factors lead to the results of English learning. Of these factors, intelligent factors and non-intelligent factors dominate the process of learning. Interest, personality, temperament difference, motivation, attitude, emotion and will belong to non-intelligent factors. In recent years, many experts and scholars have conducted a lot of researches on the influence of the intelligent factors in learning, but not many are about non-intelligent factors. As an important non-intelligent factor to improve the effect of learning, it is in great need to be studied. Learning attitudes consist of three aspects: the cognitive level, emotional factors and behavioral intention. This paper involves an inquiry into some collections of English study behaviors of Minority college students from Guangxi Normal University for Nationalities by means of questionnaire and interviews, with the purpose offending out the effects on their English learning from the three aspects above and providing some effective measures in helping students cultivate the scientific learning attitudes.

Keywords: influence; English learning attitudes; minority college students

Introduction

Successful language learning involves in man’s factors. Learning attitude is of great importance in the process of English learning. It is associated with the learning direction, effects and quality of learners. In the new era, studying the influence of learning attitudes is great positive, especially for minority college students. This article aims at researching the influence of learning attitudes on college student’s English learning in Guangxi Normal University for Nationalities from the aspect of psychology. The study examines the cognitive level, emotional factors and behavioral intention factors by conducted questionnaire and interviews with minority college students. After analyzing the data, the author drew out some conclusions.

1. Framework of learning attitude

Learning attitude generally refers to a relatively stable psychological tendency that students show on learning and the learning situation and the learners hold positive or negative attitudes on learning. It is also a kind of inner psychological state that a person shows to learning. Attitudes come into being with certain characteristics of persistence and stability. It is usually determined and illustrated from the aspects of students’ attention condition, emotional condition and will
condition to learning. The students' learning attitude concretely includes the attitude towards curriculum learning, the attitudes towards learning materials, the attitude towards teachers and school etc. Learning attitude affects the oriented-choices of students to study objective, curriculum, learning style and etc...The students who hold a positive attitude towards learning have a strong desire for knowledge and they always actively participate in various learning activities, and consciously learning, thus they obtain higher learning efficiency. That is to say, after forming learning attitudes, within a certain period of time, one has stable consistent reaction tendency to a certain object, so their English learning becomes habitual reaction behavior.

Gagne believes that the attitude is internal state which affects the individual's behavior choice in the learning activities and the product of adapting to the environments. Once people's attitude is formed, just like people's ability, it plays an important role in people's study, life and environment. And attitude is an essential and stable mental characteristic of individual which shows in learning activities. The structure of learning attitude is very complex. It consists of three psychological components: cognition, emotion and behavior intention.

1.1 Cognitive level

Cognition means that the individual has the concept, belief, knowledge and understanding with the significant evaluation on learning activities or course. For example, some students learn English mainly by memory and vocabulary development. After they have grasped the English grammar, they may pay more attention to the grammar. The attitude about English cognitive factors shows that students understand the purpose and meaning of the study and evaluate learning object, learning content and learning outcomes. Therefore, the positive learning attitude is based on the correct understanding of learning. One who has clear learning objective may have good learning attitudes; on the contrary, someone who has wrong understanding of learning may have negative learning attitudes. Perception reflects the cognition value of students in learning and is the basic attitude structure. It is implicit and hard-to-measure, but it is usually presumed from students’ attention condition of learning and the degree of concern.

1.2 Emotional factors

The emotion factor is a kind of emotional state which generates along with the cognitive level, namely the degree of like and dislike to the target. It is considered as the core components of attitude. Because the emotion itself reflects the state of students' learning attitude, emotional factors are easier to observe and measure than cognitive level. For example, some students listen to a successful English learners’ speech which evokes their learning impulses. Firstly, we have to consider that he has the consciousness of the pursuit of success (cognitive component), and inspire their desire to success, then love English learning (emotional factors). The emotional fluctuation of learners often marks that attitude may be changing or will change soon and even lead to the fluctuation of firm will and learning behavior's selective. The emotion of English learners have ups and downs or some changes to English curriculum contents, expected accomplishment, objective evaluation of the actual learning performance, the subjective need, satisfaction of learning result. However, the attitude and emotional state of English learners are more stable in a period of relative study. They may hold the attitude of likes and positive or dislikes and negative, or neutrality - that is no positive and negative effects. In general, to satisfy the need of the subjective factors of the learners can cause positive emotions, otherwise it will produce a negative emotion or indifferent attitude. Of course, the positive emotional attitudes have more dynamic action on English learning than emotional neutral state. Thus, we should try our best to converse the negative emotion to neutral emotion and positive emotion.
1.3 Behavioral intention

Behavioral intention refers to the reaction tendency of students in study, namely preparation state of behavior. It is ready to make some responses and impulsive choice for learning. Intention component of attitude is also called behavioral components, which is operational readiness for the given target and practical action impulses or actual operation fortitude. Intentional factors of learning attitude are students’ desire for learning activities. There are several main indexes to students’ behavior, such as time investment in learning English (including the extracurricular time), the extent to effort.

2. Methodology

2.1 Object

This research chose 110 minority college students as research bodies, mostly girls.

2.2 Instrument

2.2.1 Questionnaire

Li Zhiqiang, Sheng Qunli(1985) put forward that there are three types of questionnaire, among which the Finalized type Multiple-choice is the suitable one for the author. The author chose this type because the questionnaire includes many multiple choices, and there are different options for students to choose from. In order to find out what English learning attitudes minority college students have, the author laid out a questionnaire by referring to some document literature and fully studying psychology definition of learning attitude, the author laid out a questionnaire for the research. 12 questions were used in the questionnaire to survey the actual situation of students’ English learning attitude. The questions were involved in three aspects: the cognition level, emotion factors and behavior intentions. Each item contained 4 related questions. The cognitive level contained the importance of English learning, the purpose of English learning, the attitude towards examination and certificates and self-confidence. The emotional factors contain interest, self-evaluation, learning feeling, the attitude towards classes and teachers. The behavior intention contains the learning initiative, learning methods and self-reflection. From this questionnaire the author had collected much data about factors affecting minority college students’ English learning attitude. The author handed out 110 copies of questionnaire to students from grades 2015 and 2016, and collected 106 ones, covering 95 percent of the total. The data can illustrate effectively students’ conditions and summarize the main factors of their attitudes in English learning.

By analyzing the data, the author found out the average score and deviation of every option in the questionnaire. According to the positive extend of learning attitude from high level to low, of which the highest score was five, the lowest one. Every two contiguous option was discrepant to one score.

2.2.2 Interview

After the questionnaire, the author chose at random 15 of the chosen students to make an interview. The questions included the following: “What’s your purpose in Learning English?”, “What strategies will be used in your English learning?”, “Are you confident in your English learning?”, “What will you do to become a successful English learner?”

The interview focused on finding out how the minority college student conducted their English study based on the psychology factors.
3. Data Analysis

3.1 Students’ cognitive level

The author surveyed the condition of English major students’ cognitive level of English learning in the questionnaire. The percentage of every option appearing in the questionnaire is used as the reference to analyze their learning attitudes.

The Table1 includes three questions about the cognitive levels: the purpose, the attitudes towards the grade examination, self-confidence. It is seen clearly that 46.2% of students thought it important to learn English and 18.9% of students thought it very important. Only 7.5% of students held that it was not important to learn English. Thankfully, no students thought it was not significant at all. 45.5% of students learned English to find a good job. And some students studied English for certificates and interest, which accounted for 16% respectively. Different students had different attitude towards the grade examination and graded certificate. 37.6% of students believed that it was meaningful to obtain certificates. And 29.2% of them considered that it was so important to get certificates. Of course, there were also 2.7% of students thinking it no useful to obtain. In the aspect of self-confidence, unexpectedly, 27.3% of students had no confident in learning English well. 31.1% of students were not certain. However, just 36.8% of students showed confidence in learning English.

Table 1 cognitive level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Number of students/percentage statistics %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of English learning</td>
<td>49/46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards the grades in examination</td>
<td>31/29.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-confidence in English learning</td>
<td>17/16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Emotional factors

This is the first part of the second section of the questionnaire. From the Table2 it shows that 75.6% of students were mildly interested in English learning. Only 8.1% of students were very interested in English. Thankfully, there was no student hating English. Different students had different feeling in the process of English learning. Some students had no obvious feeling when they learned English, which accounted for 47.5%. 25% of students were happy in the process of English learning. But 30.2% of students had the feeling of failure. The attitudes of students towards English class were different. 40.5% of students liked most English classes. Only a few students liked all English classes, which accounted for 2.7%. And 51.3% of students just liked a few English classes.
Table 2 Emotional factors

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>13/12.2%</td>
<td>20/18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>12/11.3%</td>
<td>15/14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>27/25.4%</td>
<td>15/11.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

3.3 Behavioral intention

The Table3 showed the students’ behavioral intention in English learning, including the individual initiative, the approaches in learning and self-reflection. The author can clearly find that 40% of students occasionally learned English on their own initiative and 34.5% frequently learned English on their own initiative. The approaches to learning English major students were so different. There were 34% of students learning English by doing listening, speaking, reading and writing. 27% of students mainly joined in English classes actively. And 21.6% of students studied English on their own. 16.2% of students learned English by seeing movies and reading magazines. In order to improve English, 48.6% of students studied hard occasionally. About 62% of students occasionally had self-reflection, but just 37% of students often did that. However, there were also 18.9% of students who didn’t care about self-reflection and summary.

Table 3 Behavioral intention

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual initiative</td>
<td>15/14.2%</td>
<td>12/11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches in learning</td>
<td>28/26.4%</td>
<td>17/16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>23/21.7%</td>
<td>12/11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Interviews

The author collected the overall answers from the interviewees. Most of them believed their purpose in learning English was to grasp the language for private purposes: to find a decent job or be a successful figure after graduation. Most of them would like to use effective strategies in learning, such as study with the aid of media resources, communicate with native speakers and use English as often as possible. For the third question, only 23 of them thought they had confidence in learning English. For the last question, their answers were various from one to another.
4. Measures to cultivate scientific English learning attitude

In order to cultivate the positive learning attitudes of students, the author put forward some suggestions.

Here are the author’s suggestions. First, keep a healthy learning psychology. The author found that college students widely lack confidence. It is bad for their English learning. Teachers should help them overcome psychological barriers of English learning and keep a healthy positive leaning state. Second, change wrong understanding cognitive of English learning. Cognitive level is the foundation of learning attitude. The positive attitude comes from the right understanding. Third, build new teacher-student relationship. In the teaching process, the establishment of new teacher-student relationship, the harmonious and relaxing atmosphere can promote teaching effectiveness. Students will like English classes more. Forth, develop the ability of self-study. The independent study is important to adapt to knowledge-based economy for college students. Fifth, adopt right and effective learning strategies and proper methods. Good learning strategies are significant to students. A lot of students always lack them. Teachers should help students develop the habit of initiative learning and learn to be good at self-management learning. Teachers should help them overcome psychological barriers of English learning and keep a healthy positive leaning state. Second, change wrong understanding cognitive of English learning. Cognitive level is the foundation of learning attitude. The positive attitude comes from the right understanding. Third, build new teacher-student relationship. In the teaching process, the establishment of new teacher-student relationship, the harmonious and relaxing atmosphere can promote teaching effectiveness. Students will like English classes more. Forth, develop the ability of self-study. The independent study is important to adapt to knowledge-based economy for college students. Fifth, adopt right and effective learning strategies and proper methods. Good learning strategies are significant to students. A lot of students always lack them. Teachers should help students develop the habit of initiative learning and learn to be good at self-management.

In the aspect of cognitive level, as we can see from the data above, the great majority of students have been aware of the important of learning English and they have the specific learning aim, such as finding a good job, obtaining certificates and diploma, interest. Only the minority of students have no correct understanding of English learning and specific learning aim. The majority of students think grade examinations and certificates are important, which illustrate they can objectively treat grade examinations and certificates. But students should improve their confidence. Many students have no confidence in learning. It will influence their English achievement and motivation directly. A few students have no correct understanding of English learning, grade examinations and certificates. Thus, they have negative cognitive attitudes. Where there’s no the right cognitive level, there’s no action.

Conclusion

In the aspect of cognitive level, as we can see from the data above, the great majority of students have been aware of the important of learning English and they have the specific learning aim, such as finding a good job, obtaining certificates and diploma, interest. Only the minority of students have no correct understanding of English learning and specific learning aim. The majority of students think grade examinations and certificates are important, which illustrate they can objectively treat grade examinations and certificates. But students should improve their confidence. Many students have no confidence in learning. It will influence their English achievement and motivation directly. A few students have no correct understanding of English learning, grade examinations and certificates. Thus, they have negative cognitive attitudes. Where there’s no the right cognitive level, there’s no action.
In the aspect of emotional factors, the great majority of students were interested in English. They also could objectively evaluate their English level and they had positive attitude towards English classes. However, many students had no obvious feeling in the process of English learning. A few students were happy when they learned English, so they would enjoy learning and feel relaxed. Naturally, their learning efficiency would be improved. The students who had the feeling of failure and inferiority feeling in the process of English learning would lose the self-confidence. That would make learning less efficient.

In the aspect of behavioral intention, the great majority of students lacked of subjective initiative and the sense of participation. They should do more practical actions. And many students rarely did the self-reflection about the learning method and skills. As a whole, lots of students’ behavioral attitudes were negative. There was still a lot of room for improvement. Behavioral intention is the main factors of influencing students’ subjective initiative.

Reference