

English Learning Motivation of Chinese Higher Vocational EFL Students

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Abstract: With the flourishing of vocational education, vocational English education becomes an indispensable part of the college teaching programs. The paper investigated 206 higher vocational students so as to further observe the English learning motivation of higher vocational students. The questionnaire was adopted in the research. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to investigate the internal structural of English learning motivation. The result suggested that English learning motivation of higher vocational consisted of the learning situation, parents and social responsibility, instinct interests, instruments, social contact and going abroad. Based on the result, the teaching suggestions are also displayed in the paper.

Keywords: English Learning Motivation; Higher Vocational Students; English Learning Motivation Intensity

1. Background

With the flourishing vocational education in China, vocational English education has witnessed a progressive improvement and its reform has been further advanced. In order to better improve vocational English education, the gap among vocational students should not be ignored. Higher vocational English learners featured at weaker English foundation, uneven English proficiency, lower interests in learning English ^[1]. These factors of higher vocational EFL students play an important role in the vocational English education.

Among these individual factors, the drive to learn English as a foreign language should not be overlooked. Gardner (1985) related the L2 language motivation to the attitude toward learning language, the desire to learn the language and the motivational intensity or efforts ^[2]. In order to provide better educational implications and promote the virtuous cycle for vocational English learning, the paper focuses on the internal structural of L2 learning motivation among Chinese higher vocational colleges.

2. Foreign language motivation

With the combination with psychology, second language acquisition researches have turned focus on the individual differences. As one of the important factors, Gardner and MacIntyre suggested that prime mediator in language-learning process is motivation ^[3]. Influences on motivation have been gradually expanded alongside the combination with psychology, cognition, culture and history. Gardner divided motivation into integrative orientation and instrumental orientation ^[2]. Taking cognition into consideration, Dörnyei investigated motivational factors in the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level ^[4].

In the later researches, scholars were aware of the dynamic traits of the motivation. Motivational variables were further observed based on the collection of AMTB in the research in a longitudinal aspect ^[5]. Those variables in nature were found to change little. However, great changes took place in variables related with classroom environment. Alvyda and Regina concluded that motivation depended on the needs and interests ^[6]. However, students' needs and interests are closely related with their learning context, time requirements, and other social factors.

Under different cultural context, the different types of motivation may exert a different influence on students' language learning. Gao et al investigated Chinese undergraduates and concluded that intrinsic interest is the overriding factor to motivate students while the performance-oriented motivation may produce the inhibiting effects ^[7]. Meanwhile, time changes also gain the attention in motivational research. Lambert concluded from the interviews and questionnaires that it is difficult to tell the integrative orientation from instrumental orientation in the globalizing time.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants are 207 higher vocational students (male 99/ female 108). There are 45 freshmen, 49 sophomore and 113 juniors. As for the enrollment type, 101 students were chosen from the Spring Entrance Examination while 106 from the Nationwide Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges. They participated in the research online and randomly chosen.

3.2 Instruments

In the paper, most items of the questionnaire are borrowed from others' researches according to the reality of vocational English education. The questionnaire consists of the demographic information and English learning motivation types. Items in the research are mainly borrowed from AMTB by Gardner (2004), the research by Gao et al. (2003) and the investigation by Feng (2008) .

In the demographic information part, age, gender, region and enrolment type are adopted. Regions refers to the rural or urban areas where students come from. Enrollment type contains two major examinations, the Nationwide Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges in June and the Spring Entrance Examination.

As for English learning motivation types, there are 44 items aiming to investigate the internal structure of English learning motivation among higher vocational students. The five-level Likert scale is adopted in the options ranging from "very disagree" (1) to "very agree" (5). Among these items, three items are scored in reverse.

3.3 Procedures

The questionnaire was published online on 15th February, 2023. Participants were required to finish the questionnaire through the application named Wechat. The data was statistically analysed by SPSS 27.0 software. The validity and reliability were investigated in the first place. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on English learning motivation to find the internal structure of the L2 learning motivation among higher vocational students.

4. Result

The research firstly finished the reliability analysis on the questionnaire items. Items with corrected item-total correlation (CITC) lower than 0.4 will be deleted. In the analysis, Q21, Q25, Q37, Q38, Q43 and Q52 were deleted.

The paper adopted SPSS 27.0 software to do the exploratory factor analysis on the motivation battery. The principal component analysis (PCA) is applied to investigate factors. When the eigen value is larger than 1, the factor loading matrix will be rotated according to Varimax. The items will be selected based on the following rules. First, items with factor loading less than 0.6 will be deleted. Second, items appearing in two or more factors simultaneously and with factor loading larger than 0.6 will be deleted. Third, factor that only contains one item will also be deleted. In the research, the item Q32 was deleted due to the factor loading lower than 0.6.

As the result reported, KMO is 0.920, and the Bartlett Test of Sphericity is significant (approximately $CMIN = 4366.811$, $df = 666$, $p = 0.000$). It implicated that the items on investing motivational types are adaptable to EFA. According to the result of EFA, the Cumulative rate of Variance was 63.335%, larger than 60%.

As the table 1 showed, six factors were extracted. These items met standards that the factor loading value was higher than 0.6 and that there was no factor in the questionnaire with obvious cross-loading. Six factors were named as learning situation, parents and social responsibility, instinct interests, instruments, social contact and going abroad, respectively.

The learning situation covers items about teaching methods, English class and English teachers. Parents and social responsibility mainly consist of influence from parents and society. The intrinsic interest refers to learners' interest, desire and wishes. In the instrumental part, learners believe that studying English will benefit themselves. Social contact contains their demand in social communication and in the factor of going abroad, English learners choose to learn English mainly for the reasons of studying abroad, working overseas, or migrating.

5. The internal structure of english learning motivation among higher vocational students

For higher vocational EFL students, the learning situation matters their learning motivation. This follows the learning situation level in Dörnyei's three level of motivation . Based on the category of motivation in Gardner's motivation model (1985), the integrative orientation covers the types of intrinsic interests, social contact and instruments belongs to instrumental orientation. Under the type of parents and social responsibility part, students' learning English is motivated by the external and internal elements. Items like parents' ideas more likely belongs to the external factors. This is in line with Kim's recognition from others and ought-to self-image . On one hand, higher vocational students learn English because their parents ask them to do so. On the other hand, this factor is also related with students' own sense of obligation to learn English. As for the type of going abroad, items can be also related with both

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis on English Learning Motivations

	Exploratory Factor Analysis on English Learning Motivations					
	Learning situation	Intrinsic interests	Parents and society	Social contact	Instrument	Going abroad
Q36. I look forward to English class because my English teacher is so good.	0.831					
Q40. My English teacher can teach English vividly and interestingly.	0.778					
Q34. Learning English is for the bachelor's degree or higher.	0.774					
Q53. My English teacher is better than any of my other teachers.	0.772					
Q39. I enjoy the activities of our English class much more than those of my other classes	0.766					
Q41. My English teacher is a great source of inspiration to me.	0.765					
Q33. Learning English is to pass the exam and graduate.	0.765					
Q31. English is the important course in school.	0.758					
Q42. I really like my English teacher.	0.685					
Q19. Studying English is important because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate the English way of life.		0.738				
Q12. I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English.		0.693				
Q26. Studying English is to know lifestyles and cultures of western countries.		0.676				
Q30. I really enjoy English songs and movies.		0.657				
Q16. I would really like to learn many foreign languages.		0.635				
Q24. I wish I were fluent in English.		0.635				
Q10. I wish I could speak many foreign languages perfectly.		0.634				
Q20. I hope my English will approach native level.		0.63				
Q51. Studying English contributes to spreading Chinese culture.			0.741			
Q48. My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English.			0.683			
Q46. My parents are very interested in everything I do in English class.			0.665			
Q47. My parents encourage me to practice English as much as possible.			0.664			
Q49. I want to make a contribution to the prosperity of China.			0.658			
Q18. My parents have stressed the importance English when I leave school.			0.647			
Q50. I don't want to disappoint my parents.			0.632			
Q17. My parents feel that I should continue studying English in school.			0.617			
Q29. Studying English is important because it will be helpful to get a good job.				0.787		
Q27. Studying English is for the improvement of other subjects.				0.78		

Q35. I wish I could read newspapers and magazines in many foreign languages.	0.777
Q14. Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	0.775
Q28. Studying English enables me to know more about the world and get more information.	0.757
Q23. I enjoy meeting people who speak foreign languages.	0.785
Q15. I wish I could have many native English-speaking friends.	0.785
Q13. Studying English is important because it will allow me to meet and converse with more different people.	0.776
Q11. Studying English is important because it will allow me to be more at ease with people who speak English.	0.775
Q22. Studying English is important because other people will respect me more if I know English.	0.712
Q44. I plan to move to other countries.	0.817
Q45. I would like to seek opportunities of education and occupation in foreign countries.	0.777

integrative and instrumental orientations. Some students choose to learn English because they need to work or receive education in English while some students do so for integrating into local community after staying abroad. This is similar with Gao's investigation on undergraduate English learning motivation.

6. Conclusions

In the paper, the research observed that the internal structure of English learning motivation for higher vocational students contained six factors, such as learning situation, parents and social responsibility, intrinsic interests, instruments, social contact and going abroad. According to the observed internal structure of English learning motivation, vocational English teachers can analyze students' main triggering factor of learning English in their daily practice. On one hand, teachers can take good use of the existing motivation so as to pump up the drive to learn English. On the other hand, teachers can help students to explore the internal factor and turn it into learning behaviors as well as expand more motivations of learning English based on the characteristics of the structure.

The paper further investigated the internal structure of English learning motivation among higher vocational students. However, there are some limitations in the paper. First, the methodology of data collection only adopted the questionnaire. English learning motivation tends to be more psychological and subjective, and therefore learners' thinking will be also important. In the future, the interview can be integrated into the motivation investigation so as to further advance the research on English learning motivation. Second, the paper focused on the investigation on the motivation itself and its factors. In the future research, research can be better intertwined with the investigation on the output of English learning motivation.

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