

A Study on the Influence of Learning Motivation on English Learning

---Taking Different Age Groups as an Example

Xinyao Cheng^{1,a,*}

¹*Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia*

a. lizb21@lzu.edu.cn

**corresponding author*

Abstract: In today's society, English has become the official language of the world and is spoken by an increasing number of people. China, which is the world's most populous country, has made English a requirement for both compulsory education and college entrance exams. Having a good grasp of English is a crucial skill for study, further education, work, and life. Studying how to learn English effectively is crucial, and motivation is a significant factor that influences whether English can be learned effectively. Therefore, this study will explore the influence of motivation on English learning based on three empirical studies investigating the motivation of different age groups to learn English. The findings indicate that students' motivations for learning English vary depending on their age group. For example, lower-grade students are primarily motivated to learn English by intrinsic motivation, which is easily influenced and controlled by their parents. As a result, teachers can encourage this intrinsic motivation in their students by using cartoon illustrations in their lessons or meta-linguistic strategies. Middle school students' English learning comes mainly from extrinsic motivation rather than spontaneous formation, which requires teachers to improve students' intrinsic motivation to enhance their confidence and help them understand their position in their future career development. For elderly people, teachers need to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere and organize diverse cooperative group learning activities to motivate them to learn English from intrinsic motivation.

Keywords: SLA, motivation, lower grade students, middle school students, elderly people

1. Introduction

The majority of the Chinese population today is comprised of over 400 million individuals who are learning and using English [1]. In the field of education, in most cities, English is required as a subject in the national curriculum starting in the third grade, and in some developed cities, English is included in the compulsory curriculum from the first grade. Motivation is one of the most crucial elements affecting the effectiveness of second language acquisition (SLA) [2]. Due to China's examination system, promotion system, students' learning pressure, and adults' workplace and life needs, it leads to the fact that students learn English mainly from extrinsic motivation. Motivation is a significant factor that influences English learning [2]. This study will provide a theoretical reference for studying

motivation in English learning while dealing with this situation. This study will examine the role and influence of motivation on English learning, based on the empirical study of English learning motivation in three different age groups.

2. The Current Situation

2.1. Definition

According to Edmondson's study, motivation is an important aspect of intrinsic motivation in second language acquisition and the drive to allow students to input a second foreign language (L2) comes from motivation [3].

Motivation and psychological needs are significant parts of the self-determination theory (SDT). extrinsic motivation stems from a desire for extrinsic rewards, such as good grades, when engaging in second language learning [4]. Learning a second language results in intrinsic satisfaction and well-being, which is what intrinsic motivation is all about.

Three categories can be used to classify extrinsic motivation based on the level of self-determination. extrinsic regulation is the first category and has the least amount of autonomy out of the three. The second type, implicit regulation, describes learners engaging in activities with a high degree of self-internalization to avoid feeling guilty about intrinsic pressure; the third type, deterministic regulation, is the most autonomous of the three. It describes learners participating in tasks to receive rewards or avoid punishment. It is more self-directed, demonstrating that people act according to their wishes [5]. SDT's psychological demands are relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Autonomy is the name given to the ability to manage extrinsic motivation or self-regulation [6]. When a student is autonomous in learning a foreign language, it indicates that he manages his learning habits instead of depending on outside factors like prizes [7]. The definition of competence is the improvement of intrinsic motivation through the development of a learner's perceptual abilities following the completion of a learning task [8]. Passionate individuals who have intrinsic motivation can achieve challenging tasks, but it can be difficult to gain competence [9]. Relevance is determined by the way students engage with each other in the classroom and their perceptions of their teacher and other students [10]. When students feel that their teacher appreciates and honors extrinsic motivation and that their friends are cooperative, they are more likely to respond positively to challenging learning assignments [7].

2.2. Present Situation

To have a comprehensive perspective of the current situation of motivation for learning English, three extrinsic motivation studies on English learning motivation at different age groups will be used to illustrate this situation. For students in the upper grades and early stages, as English is relatively intrinsic motivation and not used for exams at that age, learning English is mainly driven by intrinsic motivation--to receive praise and recognition from parents [11]. The motivation to learn English is too easily influenced by parents. For middle school students, English learning motivation is related to extrinsic motivation: students who score higher are more motivated to learn English, and extrinsic motivation is gradually replacing intrinsic motivation; however, students who receive low grades are less motivated to study the language, and their levels of intrinsic motivation are significantly lower than those of students with better grades [2]. For older people, the motivation to learn English mostly comes from intrinsic motivation: for example, to make up for the regret of not learning English before, and to travel abroad in the future, etc [7]. Based on the above three extrinsic motivation studies, it can be found that the current motivation for learning English mainly lies in the following issues. For young students, learning English mainly comes from intrinsic motivation. However, this intrinsic motivation is easily influenced or controlled by parents, so it is easy to reduce; For many middle

school students, learning English mainly comes from extrinsic motivation, which is utilitarian rather than spontaneous, and intrinsic motivation is relatively low; For elderly people, learning English mainly comes from intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. In summary, the motivation for learning English varies among different age groups.

3. Reasons

3.1. Intrinsic Motivation of Lower Grade Students

Grades students are more dependent on and listen to their parents than their grades counterparts and lack a clear plan and understanding of extrinsic motivation itself and the future, so their motivation to learn English is easily influenced by their parents.

According to the socioeconomic status (SES) of parents and their children's academic motivation performance, parents have a significant and diverse effect on their children's motivation [7]. Regardless of socioeconomic status, parents have a preference for controlling their children. One emerging theory of motivation is self-determination theory (SDT). And it is closely related to the concept of self-directed learning. It effectively addresses the issue of energy generated by motivation - intrinsic motivation - in terms of the intrinsic needs of human beings, while also considering the direction and goals of motivated behavior [12]. According to SDT theory, controlling behaviors and competitive environments can lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation. For example, parents compare their children to others' children. Parental control is not always a bad thing, though. Youngsters in grades four and six are less impacted by parental control because they perceive parental goals as goals rather than control. Their extrinsic desire to learn English was easy, and because of parental influence, they frequently connected effort with achievement, thus their psychological demand for competence was met. The relationship with parents has an impact on the satisfaction with competence as well. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation declines as English gets harder in the upper grades. Higher socioeconomic class parents altered their controlling behaviors toward their kids, but lower socioeconomic status parents did not, which led to a rise in intrinsic motivation. The decrease in intrinsic motivation was due to a lack of resources and lower expectations for their children. Thus, the intrinsic motivation of students in the lower grades is susceptible to parental influence.

3.2. Higher Extrinsic Motivation of Middle School Students

The level of extrinsic motivation of high-achieving students was higher than that of average- and low-achieving students, which implies that the combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation favors extrinsic motivation.

extrinsic motivation increasingly takes the place of intrinsic motivation when high achievers pursue objectives like studying abroad and future job planning and gradually come to understand the value of intrinsic motivation for long-term English learning for their future in middle school [2]. With such intrinsic motivation, the motivation to learn English tends to be utilitarian and passive rather than self-generated. Due to personality development and self-regulation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may differ in terms of motivation [7]. On the other hand, low achievers have a sense of intrinsic motivational monitoring of the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning English, while short-term English learning is intrinsic motivational monitoring of extrinsic motivations such as meeting parental expectations or entering university. However, as a result of intrinsic motivational monitoring of English proficiency, low-achieving students were not successful in meeting their psychological needs in terms of competence and interpersonal relationships, resulting in lower levels of intrinsic motivation.

3.3. Higher Intrinsic Motivation of Elderly People

Due to China's national conditions and history, these Chinese older adults are beginners in English, lack experience in English learning, and out of extrinsic motivation is very easy to abandon studying English.

Intrinsic motivation is therefore crucial. The study discovered that these older learners' primary source of motivation for learning English was intrinsic. They thought studying English was a great way to make up for not having studied the language in the past and thought it would be highly engaging. intrinsic motivation improves on extrinsic motivation and all three forms of intrinsic motivation are given components. intrinsic motivation was improved sufficiently by providing a sense of achievement in the learning process, extrinsic motivation, and by encouraging and challenging the use of new language; intrinsic motivation created a feeling of community through interactions with peers, and this made it possible for students to enjoy studying the English lesson. They only established the rules of extrinsic motivation because there were no rewards or punishments, they learned English because of traveling and were very autonomous. However, classroom observations showed that the classroom was teacher-centered and lacked challenging tasks, which may have led to their inability to fulfill their psychological need for competence and autonomy, resulting in decreased intrinsic motivation and low classroom participation. Classroom participation remained high due to the higher involvement of older students, compatibility of teaching and learning objectives (traveling), and pleasant classroom environment [7].

4. Advice

4.1. Advice for Lower-Grade Students

Combining the characteristics of young students can enhance their interest in learning and promote their motivation. Using English cartoons as teaching resources could be an excellent option for this study's objective of encouraging young students' extrinsic motivation. It may also be useful to explore the differences between L1 and L2 in the classroom [11]. To encourage learners to be enthusiastic in learning English, teachers work to increase their meta-linguistic awareness. It appears that educators ought to give advanced students additional chances to utilize the language. Students encounter increased hurdles as tests play a bigger role in English language instruction in schools. As a result, schools ought to give students greater chances to communicate in English.

4.2. Advice for Middle School Students

Teachers are crucial in motivating students to learn English because secondary school students learn English for more utilitarian reasons, such as the college entrance examination and studying abroad. Help and promote students' motivation to learn by helping extrinsic motivation to create a proper life plan. By encouraging students' extrinsic motivation to grasp potential identities and roles they may play in their future jobs through appropriate activities and intrinsic motivation, teachers can assist students in developing, maintaining, extending, and improving their competence in English [13].

4.3. Advice for Elderly People

Teachers can support classroom autonomy by leveraging students' motivation to encourage them to participate in learning activities without feeling pressured, as older individuals generally learn English for their interests. Teachers should specifically determine the intrinsic motivation of their students and provide activities that are tailored to their requirements. Second, SDT takes care of the requirement for competence that is psychological. In the classroom, a range of exercises and more

flexible role-playing games can be implemented. Third, attention is also given to the psychological demand for relatedness. If students practice in pairs or take part in group activities, they can learn in a more relaxed setting. By connecting the classroom setting to cooperative group projects, organizational tasks can foster communication among students and strengthen their feelings of community.

5. Conclusions

As the global economy and international communication have grown, the intrinsic motivation for learning English well, as the world's first universal language, is self-evident. China has a large population, and English is an intrinsic motivation subject that determines students' enrollment. So it is necessary to learn English for people of any age group. The key to learning English well lies in the motivation for learning English. To better study the motivation for learning English, this article explores the current situation, reasons, and intrinsic motivation suggestions of learning motivation in different age groups based on three extrinsic motivation studies on learning motivation. For students in lower grades, the motivation to learn English is largely influenced by their parents due to their control and the psychological characteristics of their children (dependent on their parents). It is recommended that teachers use cartoon and comic textbooks to stimulate students' motivation to learn English. In addition, teachers can also cultivate students' metalinguistic awareness and use their native language to assist in learning foreign languages, thereby stimulating students' motivation to learn. For junior high school students, their motivation to learn English gradually shifts from intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation, and from their interests to more utilitarian pursuits for further education. At this time, teachers need to give students more encouragement, help students understand themselves, have clearer plans for the future, and maintain stable external motivation. For the elderly, learning English is to make up for the regret of not learning English before and to prepare for traveling abroad after retirement. Thus, to address the psychological needs of the elderly, sustain intrinsic motivation, and facilitate English learning in a pleasant and calm environment, teachers should establish a less stressful learning environment in the classroom.

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