

A Study on the English Learning Difficulties of Non-Major College Students and the Strategies for Cultivating Self-driven Learning

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ABSTRACT

English is the main international lingua franca in today's world. For some non-English majors, they are facing some difficulties in the process of English learning. In view of the students' lack of learning motivation and weak learning foundation over the increasing learning requirements, this paper puts forward the strategies of empathetic teaching to stimulate students' learning motivation; task-based teaching to consolidate students' learning foundation; CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teaching to enrich students' learning content by cultivating students' habit of self-driven learning and turning the passive way into the active way.

Keywords: *English learning difficulties, Non-major college students, Self-driven learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is the main international lingua franca in today's world, which is widely accepted and used by many people. It is the official or second official language of many countries and governments and the official working language of the United Nations. Many industries also use English as a common language, such as foreign trade, Internet and so on. In most countries, colleges and universities have set up majors related to English learning, and China is no exception. In China, College English courses are offered for non-English majors. But these non-English majors are facing some difficulties in the process of English learning. How to help them get out of the dilemma and cultivate the self-driven English learning habits of non-English majors will be the point of this paper.

2. SELF-DRIVEN LEARNING

Self-driven learning, as the name suggests, is learning driven by oneself.[1] Self-driven learning is contrary to Forced Teaching or Passive Learning. It is the same as the internal cause and the external cause as we often say. Internal cause is the internal reason to promote the development of things while external cause is the external reason to promote the

development of things. Internal cause is fundamental and external cause is condition. Both of them have great influence on the development and change of things. The essence of self-driven learning is to motivate the internal cause to learn. We should try to take the best of the learners' internal motivation to improve their English learning effect. Learning, under the forced and high-pressure circumstances, is far worse than that under the relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Self-driven learning is helpful for building a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, building up their self-confidence, enhancing their sense of responsibility, developing the ability of self-control and acquiring the ability to deal with problems independently.

3. THE DILEMMA OF ENGLISH LEARNING OF NON-MAJOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Non-English major college students are required to learn the corresponding College English courses while learning their own professional knowledge. Many students can be competent for this learning task, but there are much more students who cannot do it well. According to the author's observation, for non-English majors, English learning

difficulties are mainly reflected in the following aspects.

3.1 Lack of Motivation in English Learning

With the development of economy and science and technology, people enjoy the convenience of high technology in everyday life, but they also fall into the misunderstanding of pursuing material accumulation and fast-paced life, as described in an article named Quick Fix Society, which is selected from Contemporary College English, edited by Limin Yang and published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. People in modern society are pursuing more and more fast-paced life. We build more and more expressways to get from here to there faster and faster, but we lose the pleasure of enjoying the scenery all the way. We take "magic pills" (weight-loss drugs) and do liposuction surgery in order to get thinner in a faster way, but we lose the sense of achievement of enjoying healthy exercise and getting thinner slowly, moreover we take the risk of doing our health harm. We appreciate movies adapted from masterpieces or simplified versions of books in order to read masterpieces more quickly from other people's interpretation, but we lose the pleasure of enjoying the original between the lines of masterpieces. It's the same for college students now. In order to land a job faster and better after graduation, many college students will just focus on the aspects related to their employment, while ignoring the learning and accumulation of other aspects. Many college students think that they will not be engaged in English related work after graduation, English learning will only waste their time and energy, and so they are lack of motivation in English learning. In addition, their English learning foundation is relatively weak, so the motivation of English learning is insufficient.

3.2 The Foundation of English Learning Is Not Enough

English learning is a systematic learning process, including pronunciation and intonation, vocabulary, grammar and other aspects for listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. It is not only the accumulation of vocabulary or the memorization and application of grammatical rules for the learning of the language itself and the culture conveyed by the language. According to the author's observation, the vocabulary of non-English majors is seriously insufficient. Vocabulary is the

foundation for language learning just like the bricks for building a house. Lack of vocabulary can not lay a solid foundation for English learning. In addition, in the universities where the author is teaching, there is a common problem for non-English majors, that is, poor pronunciation and intonation. Only a few students can have a good performance in this aspect, most students have some problems in the pronunciation and intonation more or less. Moreover, in senior high school, the students focus on the cultivation of the knowledge for the language itself, including grammar, reading comprehension or writing ability, but ignore the ability of listening and speaking comprehension relatively, so the ability of listening comprehension and oral expression of non-English majors are not very good. The weak foundation makes them feel powerless and frustrated in the process of learning English, which makes them less motivated and falls into a vicious circle for English learning.

3.3 Increasing Requirements for English Learning

The motivation and foundation of English learning of non-English major students in some colleges and universities are weak, but the requirements of society and schools for English learning are increasing. Take the National College English Test Band 4, which most college students will take part in, for example, in recent years, it has become more and more widely-tested, including oral English test and translation test related to Chinese traditional culture, covering almost all aspects of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. In order to pass the exam successfully, students should not only master the necessary vocabulary and grammar knowledge, but also have considerable listening and speaking ability, reading ability, writing ability and translation ability. Just like the systematic learning of language itself, this test is also a systematic examination of language learning for language learners. This examination plays a very important role. In addition to a more comprehensive and systematic examination of learners' English learning, it is also one of the necessary conditions for college students to graduate successfully.

4. STRATEGIES FOR CULTIVATING STUDENTS' SELF-DRIVEN LEARNING

Got a problem, saw a solution. In view of the importance of English learning, and the difficulties

of college non-English majors in English learning, the author intends to try to cultivate students' self-driven learning, take advantage of the students' self-initiative, help them take the initiative to learn, and no longer regard English learning in the examination-oriented way, but to enjoy the fun of English learning from the following aspects.

4.1 Empathetic Teaching — Stimulating Students' Learning Motivation

Teaching activities are not teachers' unilateral teaching or students' unilateral learning, but interactive teaching activities between teachers and students. Empathy, according to Baidu Encyclopedia, is also called the same feelings. It is put forward by Rogers, the founder of humanism. It refers to the ability to experience other people's inner world, including three aspects in detail. First, the counselor goes deep into the other person's heart to experience his emotion with the help of his words and deeds. Second, with the help of their own knowledge and experience, counselors can grasp the relationship between the experience of the clients and their personality, so as to better understand the essence of the problem. Third, the counselor uses skills to convey his empathy to the other party, so as to influence the other party and get the corresponding feedback. And it is true of teaching.[2] When it is applied to teaching, teachers can deeply experience students' difficulties in learning English with the help of students' words and deeds, grasp the relationship between students' psychology, thinking, emotion and English learning on the basis of their own knowledge and experience, and use some methods and skills to make students feel the teacher's understanding and get corresponding feedback. This way of putting oneself in the students' shoes and making them feel this kind of understanding and acceptance can bridge the gap between teachers and students, bridge the sense of alienation between teachers and students, bridge the sense of alienation between students and English learning, and promote students to learn spontaneously, that is, self-driven learning.

4.2 Task-based Teaching — Consolidating Students' Learning Foundation

Task-based language teaching (TBLT), according to Baidu Encyclopedia, refers to the teaching conducted by teachers by guiding language learners to complete tasks in the classroom. It is a kind of teaching that emphasizes "learning by doing". It is the development of

communicative teaching method. [3] The core of task-based teaching method is to complete the tasks. In the process of completing the task, it can stimulate students' interest in learning, promote them to use the knowledge they have learned, inspire their creative thinking ability, expand their knowledge, and cultivate their ability to communicate with people and adapt to changes. This will not only lay a solid foundation for students' English learning, but also be conducive to their all-round development. But it is worth noting that teachers should first pay attention to the difficulty of the task when they assign the task, which should not be too difficult or too simple. In the long run, too difficult or too simple tasks cannot stimulate students' interest in learning, and cannot guarantee the successful development of teaching activities and the successful achievement of teaching effect. Secondly, teachers should pay attention to the diversity of tasks when they assign them. If the task is single, students may be interested in it at the very beginning, but as time goes by, they will lose interest gradually. Finally, teachers should pay attention to the timeliness of tasks when they assign tasks. While assigning tasks, teachers should consider combining the current political affairs or social hot issues to attract students' attention, enhance students' interest and participation, so that students can consolidate their English learning foundation in the process of completing tasks spontaneously.

4.3 CLIL Teaching — Enriching Students' Learning Content

CLIL teaching, which is the abbreviation for Content and Language Integrated Learning, is a teaching method that combines content and language scientifically. [4] It not only focuses on the learning of the language itself, but also on the learning of the content conveyed by the language. It can activate and enrich the boring language teaching. The process of language learning is not just to remember the words, phrases, syntax and grammar, that is, the process of language learning is not just to learn the rules. When language learning is no longer boring and abstract learning for symbols, but concrete and vivid content learning, students can experience the fun of learning to a certain extent. When students experience the fun of learning, they will naturally improve their interest in learning, and then they will go to do some self-study. When students carry out this self-learning, they will start the journey of self-thinking and self-driven learning.

5. CONCLUSION

Human beings' initiative plays a decisive role in human beings' development. How to mobilize students' initiative and construct self-driven learning is a proposition worthy of teachers' exploration. In view of the students' lack of learning motivation and weak learning foundation, but the increasing learning requirements, this paper puts forward the strategies of empathetic teaching to stimulate students' learning motivation; task-based teaching to consolidate students' learning foundation; CLIL teaching to enrich students' learning content to try to cultivate students' habit of self-driven learning, and turn the passive way into the active way, that is, learn spontaneously with self-control.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Xiaoyan Li.

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