

# Research on Current Situation and Cause of English Learning Burnout of Undergraduates of Chinese Public Security Colleges

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**Abstract.** Bad learning effects have posed the biggest obstacle to English teaching reform of public security colleges of China. This paper conducts a deep investigation on current situation and cause of learning burnout in college English study among 300 non-English majors from similar colleges by use of questionnaire method. It finds out that students are generally in a medium burnout state; correlation between the variables of grade and English level and learning burnout of students in English appears to be positive and negative respectively; the bad “achievement motivation factor”, negative “teacher factor” and unfriendly “environmental factor” serve as the major causes of learning burnout.

**Keywords:** China; Public security colleges; Undergraduates; English learning burnout; Current situation; Cause.

## 1. Introduction

English Learning burnout is a ubiquitous mental phenomenon existing in institutions of higher learning of China [2]. The phenomenon that undergraduates lose interest in college English course, have passive and indifferent attitudes toward English study and have low self-efficacy is extremely conspicuous in public security colleges of China, which not only has a strong impact on English teaching quality and over-all development of students but also goes against construction of study style and realization of objective of personnel cultivation of the college. This research tries to make an investigation on non-English major undergraduates of a certain public security college of China so as to acquire detailed information of actual conditions of college English learning burnout and analyze specific causes for formation of burnout for the purpose of providing the intervention strategies of teachers in English teaching and college English teaching reform of such colleges with realistic basis.

## 2. Research design

### 2.1 Research Questions

1) How is the conditions and degree of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates in public security colleges of China? 2) Whether the demographic variables, such as grade and English level of non-English major undergraduates of public security colleges of China have impact on the degree of their English learning burnout [7-9]? 3) What causes English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of public security colleges of China?

### 2.2 Research Methodology

1) Research Subjects. Subjects participating in this research include 150 non-English major undergraduates enrolled in 2013 (sophomores) and 150 non-English major undergraduates enrolled in 2014 (freshmen) respectively, totaling 300, from Jiangxi Police College of China; among whom, there are 255 boy students and 45 girl students. Subjects participating in the comparative study on the variable of English level are restricted to 140 students of 2013 grade who have taken the national CET4. Among whom, there are 56 high-level students (CET score $\geq$ 425) and 84 low-level students (CET score $<$ 425).

2) Research Tool. This research adopts the Questionnaire on English Learning Burnout of Undergraduates that is recomposed on the basis of burnout scale prepared by former scholar. It is composed of three parts. The first part covers basic personal information, including demographic variables like the grade, sex and English level of the research subjects. The second part is the

questionnaire of “learning burnout of college students” prepared by Lian Rong and other researchers [1, 3, 4, 5]. The questionnaire covers three dimensions, which are being down in spirits, misbehaving and low sense of achievement. It contains 20 questions in total. The Cronbach a coefficient of general scale is 0.865; the split-half reliability is 0.880; correlation between each question and the general scale is from 0.408 to 0.762 ( $P < 0.01$ ). The third part is “the scale of causes of English learning burnout of college students” worked out by the researcher Han Yuanyuan [6]. This scale contains four dimensions, which are respectively achievement motivation factor, teacher factor, mental health factor and environmental factor. It contains 24 questions in total. The coefficient of general scale is 0.895; the split-half reliability is 0.820; correlation between each dimension and the general scale is from 0.697 to 0.852 ( $P < 0.01$ ). The questionnaire in the second part and scale in the third part all adopt Likerts5-point scale scoring, from “completely in conformity with” (5 scores), “rather in conformity with” (4 scores), “uncertain” (3 scores), “great inconformity” (2 scores) to “complete inconformity” (1 score). Part of questions adopts the mode of reverse scoring. The higher the score of the second part is, the more serious the degree of English learning burnout will be. The higher the total scores of each dimension of the third part is, the greater the impact it will have on learning burnout.

3) Data collection and Analysis. In order to guarantee truth and reliability of survey data, all questionnaires are issued for testing by the researcher himself/herself in May 2015 (the 2nd semester of that academic year) in English classes in a random manner and collected on the spot. There are 320 questionnaires in total are issued and 300 valid questionnaires are collected. After data is collected, the social sciences statistical software SPSS17.0 is used for descriptive statistical analysis, independent-samples T test and correlation statistical analysis.

### 3. Research Results

#### 3.1 Analysis of current situation of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of Chinese public security colleges

##### 3.1.1 Analysis of overall situation of English learning burnout

Table 1 shows that: total score of the English learning burnout of freshmen and sophomores of Jiangxi Police College is 68.08 (total score of the questionnaire is 100) indicating that it belongs to the burnout state. Ensemble average is 3.42 indicating that it belongs to medium burnout. Take the theoretical mid-value 3 as reference, general proportion of those larger than or equal to the mid-value 3 reaches up to 61.1%. In addition, the proportion under each dimension is close to or greater than 60%, which indicates that more than half of the non-English major undergraduates of the college have serious learning burnout in English study. In which, mean value of the dimension of “misbehaving” is 3.89, which is close to “be rather in conformity” indicating that it belongs to high burnout state; mean values of the two dimensions of “being down in spirits” and “low sense of achievement” are respectively 3.23 and 3.15, which belong to medium burnout.

Table 1 Overall conditions of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of Chinese public security colleges

Dimension	Mean value ±standard deviation	Min. value	Max. value	Number of items	Average score	Proportion of those larger than or equal to the mid-value 3
Being down in spirits	25.84±7.546	10	40	8	3.23	59.5%
Misbehaving	23.34±7.125	7	30	6	3.89	66.1%
Low sense of achievement	18.90±5.918	8	28	6	3.15	57.7%
Total score of burnout	68.08±20.589	25	98	20	3.42	61.1%
Valid questionnaires	300					

### 3.1.2 Impact of the grade variable on English learning burnout

Table 2 Comparison of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of different grades

Dimension	Grade	Mean value $\pm$ standard deviation	Average score	t
Being down in spirits	2013	28.21 $\pm$ 7.72	3.526	-2.96**
	2014	23.47 $\pm$ 5.37	2.934	
Misbehaving	2013	25.57 $\pm$ 6.97	4.262	-2.103*
	2014	21.11 $\pm$ 5.27	3.518	
Low sense of achievement	2013	20.19 $\pm$ 7.08	3.365	-1.889
	2014	17.61 $\pm$ 5.54	2.935	
Total score of burnout	2013	73.98 $\pm$ 21.77	3.699	-3.531***
	2014	62.18 $\pm$ 16.18	3.109	

(Notes: \*\*\* P<0.001, \*\*P<0.01, \* P<0.05)

It can be seen from table 2 that both total score of English learning burnout of sophomores of Jiangxi Police College and total scores of each dimension are higher than that of the freshmen respectively, which indicates that the grade in which the non-English major undergraduates of this college are has a positive correlation with English learning burnout level. In other words, the grade is the higher, the burnout will become the greater. The independent-samples T test indicates that burnout degree of sophomores is significantly greater than burnout degree of freshmen; in terms of comparison of each dimension, except for the dimension of “low sense of achievement”, there is significant difference between the total scores of other dimensions of freshmen and sophomores. Levels of significance of the two dimensions of “being low in spirits” and “misbehaving” are respectively  $t=-2.96$ , \*\* P<0.01 and  $t=-2.103$ , \*P<0.05.

### 3.1.3 Impact of the variable of English level on English learning burnout

Table 3 Comparison of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates with different English levels

Dimension	English level	Number of testees	Mean value $\pm$ standard deviation	Average score	t
Being down in spirits	High	56	23.78 $\pm$ 5.924	2.973	-3.796***
	Low	84	32.17 $\pm$ 8.485	4.021	
Misbehaving	High	56	22.67 $\pm$ 5.648	3.778	-2.103*
	Low	84	28.04 $\pm$ 7.519	4.673	
Low sense of achievement	High	56	16.93 $\pm$ 7.031	2.822	-3.335***
	Low	84	23.16 $\pm$ 7.889	3.860	
Total score of burnout	High	56	63.38 $\pm$ 16.429	3.169	-2.047*
	Low	84	83.37 $\pm$ 20.983	4.169	

(Notes: \*\*\* P<0.001, \*\*P<0.01, \* P<0.05)

It can be seen from table 3 that the total score of burnout of students who fail to pass the CET4 is 83.37, which belongs to extreme tired state. Moreover, tired degree is significantly higher than the total score of burnout of students who have already passed the CET4, which is 63.38. This indicates that there is a negative correlation between English level of non-English major undergraduates of the college and its English learning burnout, namely the lower the English level is, the higher the degree of English learning burnout will become. In terms of the three dimensions of “being down in spirits”, “misbehaving” and “low sense of achievement”, scores of burnout of students who fail to pass the CET4 is significantly higher than that of the students who have passed CET4. Moreover, differences are especially significant in respect of the two dimensions of “being down in spirits” and “low sense of achievement”, which indicates that a vicious cycle has already formed between unhealthy emotions in English learning of non-English major undergraduates of this college and their English level. In other words, the lower the English level is, the easier the bad emotions will emerge, including bad learning mood, having no sense of achievement through study and skipping classes. Conversely, those bad emotions will cause lower English level.

### 3.2 Analysis of causes of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of Chinese public security colleges

Table 4 Analysis of correlation between score and cause of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of Chinese public security colleges

Cause Burnout	Achievement motivation	Teacher	Mental health	Environment	Total cause
Being down in spirits	.589**	.335*	.591**	.446**	.527**
Misbehaving	.279**	.241**	.213**	.295**	.276**
Low sense of achievement	-.443**	-.063	-.107*	-.054	-.183**
Total burnout	.399**	.416**	.333**	.409**	.467**

(Notes: \*\*\* P<0.001, \*\*P<0.01, \* P<0.05)

Data in table 4 shows that except for the “teacher factor” and “environmental factor” in scale of causes of English learning burnout, which are not significantly related to the single dimension of “low sense of achievement” in college English learning burnout scale, correlations between 4 dimensions in the scale of causes of English learning burnout and their total scores and the 3 dimensions in English learning burnout scale and their total scores are significant. And most of correlations are extremely significant. This indicates that the 4 dimensions in the scale of causes of English learning burnout give a quite good explanation for causes of English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of Jiangxi Police College.

Table 5 Statistics of causes English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates in public security colleges

Cause dimension	Number of testees	Mean value± standard deviation	Min. value	Max. value	Number of items	Average score	Proportion of those larger than mid-value 3
Achievement motivation	300	34.65±8.914	12	40	9	3.85	56.4%
Teacher	300	25.92±5.762	6	30	6	4.32	71.3%
Mental health	300	11.35±4.275	5	19	5	2.27	30.5%
Environment	300	17.00±4.634	7	20	4	4.25	64.9%
Total	300	88.92±20.358	30	109	24	3.705	

The descriptive statistics in table 5 specifically indicates students’ understandings of specific causes for their own burnout. In terms of the dimension of “achievement motivation”, average score of 9 items of students is 3.85. And more than half the students (56.4%) choose “basically in conformity with” and above, indicating that learning burnout of a large portion of students is caused by previous unsuccessful English study experiences, unsatisfactory English performance, low English study effects, etc. In terms of the dimension of “teacher factor”, average score of 6 items of students is 4.32 and more than two thirds students (71.3%) choose “basically in conformity with” or “completely in conformity with” indicating that English teachers of this college play a very important negative role in generation of English learning burnout of students in this college: teachers fail to pay close attention to emotion changes and stimulate English study of students during English teaching; They adopt single and boring teaching methods and fail to update teaching contents and methods according to actual demands of students. In terms of the dimension of “mental health factor”, students get an average score of 2.27 in 5 items. Only less than one third students’ choice is larger than the mid-value 3, indicating that psychology of students of this college is relatively mature and it exerts little impact on learning burnout. In terms of the dimension of “environmental factor”, students’ choices are similar to choices in dimension of “teacher factor” indicating that environment for college English study in this college is not friendly; cheating phenomenon is serious, so whether students make effort to learn English cannot be reflected in assessment at end of the semester; learning atmosphere is not

dense; learning burnout emotions of a small number of students are not controlled and guided in time so that unhealthy emotions of burnout gradually pervade.

#### 4. Conclusion

The followings can be concluded from this research: 1) College English study of non-English major undergraduates of Jiangxi Police College is basically in the state of burnout, and the burnout degree is medium. But more than half students have serious burnout conditions, in which, the dimension of “misbehaving” is in highly burnout state; 2) the two variables, grade and English level, of non-English major undergraduates of this college exert significant influence on degree of English learning burnout. In which, there is a positive correlation between the variable of grade and learning burnout, namely the higher the grade is, the greater the learning burnout degree will become; there is a negative correlation between the variable of English level and college English learning burnout, namely the lower the English level is, the greater the degree of English learning burnout will become; 3) English learning burnout of non-English major undergraduates of this college is mainly caused by students’ bad “achievement motivation factor”, negative “teacher factor” and unfriendly “environmental factor”.

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