

Influence of Student English Learning Motivation and English Teaching Methods on English Learning Efficiency among College Students in Yunnan, China

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Abstract

This study aims to systematically explore the impact of English learning motivation and teaching methods on the learning efficiency of college students in Yunnan, with the goal of providing both theoretical foundations and practical guidance for improving students' English learning outcomes. Based on Gardner's Socio-Educational Model, the study analyzes the crucial role of social and educational factors in second language acquisition, emphasizing the influence of learning environment, cultural background, and teacher-student interaction on learning efficiency. Regarding learning motivation, this study draws on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Two-Factor Theory to conduct an in-depth analysis of the roles and interrelationships of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation in the English learning process. SDT highlights the autonomy of motivation, exploring students' motivational characteristics driven by interest, personal growth, and self-fulfillment. Meanwhile, the Two-Factor Theory further distinguishes between motivators and hygiene factors, identifying key factors that affect students' long-term learning persistence. In terms of teaching methods, this study is based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to examine how teachers can enhance students' learning efficiency by providing appropriate instructional guidance and support at an optimal challenge level. Additionally, the study incorporates Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to assess their effectiveness in improving students' communication skills and practical language use. CLT emphasizes real-life communication as the core of language learning and encourages interactive learning, while TBLT focuses on learning through task completion to enhance students' comprehensive language proficiency. The study employs a stratified random sampling method to ensure the representativeness of the sample, covering college students from different academic years and disciplines in Yunnan. Statistical analyses such as independent samples t-test, one-way ANOVA, and multiple hierarchical regressions are used to examine the relationships between various variables and to reveal the specific impact of

motivation and teaching methods on English learning efficiency. The results highlight the significant influence of motivation and teaching methods on English learning efficiency and provide recommendations for optimizing the learning environment, fostering intrinsic motivation, and improving teaching strategies. These suggestions aim to enhance students' English proficiency by creating a more effective and engaging learning experience.

Keywords: Student English Learning Motivation, English Teaching Methods, English Learning Efficiency

Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, the importance of the English major has become increasingly prominent. Against this backdrop, college students' English education has become a focal point for teachers. English not only helps students better understand the world but also promotes the international exchange of Chinese culture. In the process of learning English, students can cultivate an inclusive and open mindset, enhance cross-cultural communication skills, and establish correct values and life perspectives. However, despite the rich English learning resources provided by schools, differences in teaching methods and students' learning motivation lead to varying learning outcomes. Therefore, this study holds significant importance.

Research on learning motivation has progressively deepened, highlighting its role in driving students' engagement and academic success. Scholars distinguish between different types of motivation, emphasizing the varying degrees of influence they exert on learners' persistence and performance. Studies suggest that intrinsic motivation fosters long-term learning, while external factors can also play a significant role in shaping students' motivation.

In the field of second language acquisition, theoretical developments have evolved from early motivation models to more complex frameworks that incorporate self-concept and social influences. Contemporary research underscores the interaction between learners' personal aspirations, external expectations, and their actual learning experiences. These insights have shaped modern perspectives on how motivation affects language learning outcomes.

In China, empirical studies have explored motivation's impact on English learning efficiency, its internal structure, and its relationship with self-concept. Researchers have utilized various analytical models to examine these factors, revealing that motivation influences both learning beliefs and strategic behaviors. Recent studies have further validated motivation's crucial role in shaping students' language learning trajectories, reinforcing the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in educational contexts.

Learning motivation is an internal driving force that is stimulated, maintained, and promotes an individual's participation in learning activities, mastery of knowledge and skills, and achievement of learning goals through internal or external factors during the learning process. Students with strong learning motivation are usually proactive in seeking learning opportunities and are willing to invest more time and effort to acquire new knowledge and skills. They are also more willing to face difficulties and challenges in learning. The academic community generally classifies learning motivation into three types: surface motivation, deep motivation, and achievement motivation (Wang, 2022).

Surface motivation is a relatively superficial type of learning motivation that is not directly related to deep understanding or intrinsic interest but is more associated with external rewards or the avoidance of punishment, such as studying hard to pass exams or receive rewards. This type of motivation primarily comes from external sources and is closely related to personal future prospects (Zhao, 2021). Deep motivation, on the other hand, stems from a student's intrinsic desire for self-improvement and is closely linked to interests, values, and goals, providing a lasting driving force. Achievement motivation is driven by students' personal ambitions and aspirations for self-fulfillment, with the aim of contributing to social progress. Deep motivation and achievement motivation have a more profound impact, offering students continuous learning and exploration momentum.

The study of second language learning motivation by foreign social psychology scholars can be divided into three stages: the classic motivation theory proposed by Gardner & Lambert in the 1960s–1970s, which includes instrumental motivation and integrative motivation; the social-contextual motivation model from the 1980s–1990s; and the process-oriented motivation research in the new millennium. In the third stage, Dörnyei proposed the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). This theoretical framework consists of three components: the Ideal L2 Self, which represents the ideal second language proficiency level that learners aim to achieve—higher ideal L2 self-positioning leads to stronger second language learning motivation; the Ought-to L2 Self, which refers to the second language proficiency level that learners believe they should achieve—this is more influenced by external factors such as parents' and teachers' expectations, as well as learners' responsibilities and obligations as children and students; and the L2 Learning Experience, which is related to learners' attitudes toward second language learning and is influenced by specific factors associated with the learning environment and experiences (Dörnyei, 2005).

Research on English learning motivation in China can be categorized into three main types. The first type primarily focuses on discussing the impact of motivation and other learner-related factors on English performance. For example, Wen Qiufang investigated the patterns and characteristics of changes in learning motivation, learning beliefs, and learning strategies, pointing out that motivation influences beliefs and strategies (Wen, 2001). Gao Yihong et al. summarized seven types of motivation: intrinsic interest, studying abroad, personal development, information media, academic achievement, situational factors, and social responsibility, and indicated that different types of motivation lead to varying levels of effort in English learning. The second type mainly explores the classification and internal structure of motivation. For instance, Qin Xiaoqing and Wen Qiufang used structural equation modeling to analyze the internal structure of English learning motivation among non-English major college students (Gao, 2003). The third type focuses on the relationship between motivation and self-concept. For example, Xu Hongchen and Gao Yihong employed structural equation modeling to examine the mutual influence between students' English learning motivation types and changes in self-identity. The L2 Motivational Self System is currently a cutting-edge research model in second language motivation studies both domestically and internationally (Liu, 2013).

Dong (2024) pointed out in his research that, as the main subject of learning, students' personal factors are the primary factors influencing their learning motivation. Students'

learning interest and curiosity directly determine the strength of their learning motivation—the higher the interest and the stronger the curiosity, the higher the learning motivation.

Xu (2015) proposed that in the process of second language acquisition, learners' learning motivation plays a crucial role in learning outcomes and is the most dynamic psychological factor among learner-related factors. English teachers should adopt effective motivational teaching strategies to stimulate learners' motivation, ensuring more effective and lasting language learning, which is more important than simply imparting language knowledge and skills.

The college years are a critical period for students' English learning. During this time, they need to improve their English proficiency through systematic and autonomous learning to meet future career and societal demands. Motivation is an essential affective factor influencing English learning. Researching college students' English learning motivation and autonomous learning status holds significant theoretical and practical value. Understanding students' English learning motivation can help educators better design and provide English teaching resources and methods. Different learning motivations affect students' learning interests, learning goals, and choices of learning strategies. By analyzing students' autonomous learning behaviors and attitudes, educators can identify their strengths and weaknesses in learning and provide targeted support and training. This, in turn, helps students develop autonomous learning abilities and habits, enhancing their initiative and sense of achievement in English learning (Chen, 2024).

As an indispensable language course in China's education system, English has been a core subject from primary school to college. College English, as a compulsory course for college students, requires students from all disciplines to engage in English learning while studying their professional knowledge. Additionally, the foundation for the College English Test Band 4 and Band 6 (CET-4 and CET-6) also comes from College English classes, making it extremely important to enhance the effectiveness of College English teaching. More importantly, college students differ from high school students in that their cognitive activity and breadth of thinking have reached a higher level. They have already developed a certain level of resistance to dull language learning, and the temptations of the online world, coupled with the pressure of studying other professional courses, have further reduced their enthusiasm for College English learning and weakened their attention. Therefore, how College English teachers can use various teaching methods to enhance students' learning interest is of great significance (Gao, 2021).

Due to varying levels of English proficiency among students, some students in College English classes are not actively engaged in learning at all. They are merely cooperating with the teacher, following all teaching plans and designs according to the teacher's instructions, without being able to exercise their own initiative in English learning (Yan, 2020).

Fu (2024) also pointed out that many problems still exist in current College English teaching. Teaching methods and strategies remain largely traditional and fail to meet students' learning and developmental needs, running counter to the talent cultivation programs required in the new era. In the modern era, to cultivate well-rounded talents with professional competence and comprehensive abilities, College English teaching should break free from the constraints

of traditional models and explore new teaching methods and strategies. This would not only provide fresh perspectives for College English instruction but also cater to students' developmental needs while nurturing outstanding talents for national development and national rejuvenation.

Unlike high school English teaching, College English instruction places greater emphasis on teacher-student interaction to create an engaging classroom atmosphere and stimulate students' interest. However, in many colleges, English classes are still conducted in a traditional lecture-based format, where students merely listen passively. In a 45-minute class, the teacher may spend up to 40 minutes lecturing, leaving little room for student-teacher interaction, making it difficult to achieve an interactive classroom environment (Su, 2020).

Many college instructors have developed their own unique teaching methods. Although College English teaching follows a designated textbook, teachers do not strictly adhere to it; instead, they focus on expanding relevant knowledge. For example, in vocabulary learning, teachers integrate collocation rules, introduce corresponding phrase meanings, and guide students to think in Chinese or English based on grammar structures. By leading students through a multi-layered, multi-perspective, and diversified learning process, they gradually deepen their understanding, optimize vocabulary memorization, and reinforce word learning effectiveness. This step-by-step approach helps minimize vocabulary-related errors in English learning, ultimately improving teaching effectiveness (Wang, 2020).

In College English classroom teaching, teachers should be skilled at stimulating students' curiosity, allowing them to gain a more concrete understanding of College English knowledge through the process of curiosity. College students, in fact, have a certain level of curiosity about everything. For example, when teaching grammar, teachers can encourage students to engage in discussions first, and then analyze and explain the issue afterward. This approach can pique students' curiosity about the knowledge, making grammar learning more engaging. Therefore, curiosity-driven teaching can be an effective method for grammar instruction.

Of course, for College English teachers, if they themselves do not have a strong interest in English, it will be difficult to showcase the art of teaching in the classroom. Teaching is no longer just about imparting traditional knowledge; it is about inspiring and motivating students. Therefore, in College English courses, teachers should maintain a certain level of enthusiasm for the subject, using their passion to spark students' interest in various aspects of learning (Zhou, 2018).

She also pointed out that in the process of College English teaching, it is essential to recognize that College English knowledge often originates from real-life contexts. Only by effectively integrating life experiences into teaching can students gradually learn to use English knowledge to solve everyday problems. This helps students understand that they maintain a meaningful interaction with English, ultimately increasing their interest in College English courses.

Objectives

Specific research objectives include

- i. To examine the status of English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan, China.
- ii. To compare the status of English learning efficiency between male and female college students in Yunnan, China.
- iii. To analyze English learning efficiency across different grades of college students in Yunnan, China.
- iv. To assess the influence of students' English learning motivation domains (purpose of learning English, engagement in learning English, attitude towards English learning, expectations from English learning) on their learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan, China.
- v. To evaluate the influence of English teaching method domains (teaching materials and resources, classroom environment, teaching methods and techniques, assessment and feedback) on English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan, China.

Method

This study will adopt a quantitative research method, considering the research objectives, which involve systematically collecting quantifiable data for statistical analysis. Through the quantitative approach, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relationships between variables and precisely measure influencing factors. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the impact of students' English learning motivation and teachers' teaching choices on the learning effectiveness of students in second-language classrooms. To this end, this study will rely on quantitative research methods, including the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data.

Firstly, research design, methods, and approaches are crucial in ensuring the reliability and validity of the study. The selected research method will provide precise and quantifiable data, enabling a deeper understanding of the relationship between students' English learning motivation, English teaching methods, and learning efficiency. To ensure the reliability and objectivity of the study, a structured questionnaire will be used. This questionnaire is designed to collect information on the study variables, including students' English learning motivation, English teaching methods, and their learning efficiency. The questionnaire will be distributed to a representative sample of students in Yunnan Province. The sampling technique will aim to cover college students from various backgrounds and fields of study, ensuring the broad applicability of the research findings. The study scope is limited to colleges in Yunnan Province, allowing for a more focused examination of the group characteristics and cultural context of students in this region. The research population includes all college students in Yunnan Province. However, to ensure the representativeness and generalizability of the findings, this study will adopt a stratified random sampling technique, selecting a diverse sample that reflects the overall characteristics of the population. The data collection process will involve distributing questionnaires to the selected sample population, compiling the responses, and analyzing the collected data using statistical software. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the key factors influencing English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan Province and provide valuable insights for teaching practices and future research.

Secondly, this study will utilize SPSS statistical analysis software to conduct a quantitative analysis of the collected data, ensuring the scientific rigor and accuracy of the research findings. First, Descriptive Statistics will be used to analyze the overall status of English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan Province. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage will be calculated to describe students' performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Second, the Independent Sample T-test will be applied to compare the differences in English learning efficiency between male and female students, determining whether there is a significant difference between the two groups. Then, One-Way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) will be conducted to examine variations in English learning efficiency across different academic years (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). If the results are significant, post-hoc tests (e.g., Tukey's HSD test) will be performed to identify specific grade-level differences. Additionally, Multiple Regression Analysis will be employed to investigate the impact of different dimensions of English learning motivation (purpose of learning English, engagement in learning English, attitude towards English learning, and expectations from English learning) on English learning efficiency. English learning efficiency will be set as the dependent variable, while the motivation dimensions will serve as independent variables to examine their predictive power and significance. Furthermore, to assess the influence of various dimensions of English teaching methods (teaching materials and resources, classroom environment, teaching methods and techniques, assessment and feedback) on English learning efficiency, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be used for path analysis if the data meet the necessary assumptions.

This will help clarify how English teaching methods influence students' learning efficiency. If SEM is not applicable, Multiple Regression Analysis will be used instead to predict the impact of teaching methods on learning efficiency. Regarding the data analysis process, this study will first conduct data preprocessing, checking the completeness of the questionnaire responses and eliminating invalid or anomalous data. Next, Descriptive Statistics will be performed to calculate basic statistical characteristics. Following this, hypothesis testing will be conducted using T-tests and ANOVA to examine the effects of variables such as gender and academic year on English learning efficiency. Subsequently, regression analysis will be applied to verify the predictive role of English learning motivation and teaching methods in learning efficiency. Finally, data visualization (e.g., bar charts, scatter plots) will be used to present the research findings in an intuitive manner, enhancing the interpretability of the results. By systematically integrating various quantitative data analysis methods, this study ensures the reliability and objectivity of the research conclusions. The combination of multiple statistical approaches will enable a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between students' English learning motivation, teaching methods, and English learning efficiency, providing a solid scientific basis for improving English language education in colleges in Yunnan Province. Thirdly, The quantitative research design of this study will involve distributing a structured questionnaire to a large sample of college students in Yunnan Province. The questionnaire will cover data collection in the following areas:

English Learning Efficiency Questionnaire. Through a questionnaire survey on students' English learning efficiency, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of their language abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This includes their listening comprehension skills, fluency in oral expression, proficiency in reading comprehension, and the level of development in writing skills.

Additionally, the questionnaire will delve into students' mastery of grammar and vocabulary, as well as their expressive abilities, providing a more specific and accurate analysis of their learning situation. Through this approach, we can offer more targeted support and guidance for the individualized learning needs of each student, further fostering their overall development in the process of learning English.

This section of the questionnaire consists of four domains: Listening Skills, Reading Comprehension, Speaking Skills, and Writing Skills, with a total of 40 questions.

English Learning Motivation Questionnaire. Understanding of students' motivation and willingness in the process of learning English. Through systematic questioning, the questionnaire allows for a detailed assessment of students' level of interest in English learning and the underlying motivational factors. This includes understanding whether students engage in English learning due to professional needs, personal interests, study abroad plans, or other specific goals. This section of the questionnaire consists of four domains: English Learning Purpose, English Learning Engagement, English Learning Attitude, and English Learning Expectation, with a total of 40 questions.

English Teaching Methods Questionnaire. The English Teaching Methods Questionnaire is designed to collect opinions and experiences from students or educators regarding English teaching methods through a series of questions. Its primary aim is to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of English teaching. Through survey responses, the questionnaire will provide insights into students' perceptions and opinions on various teaching methods, allowing for an assessment of how effective these methods are in facilitating the learning process. This section of the questionnaire consists of four domains: Teaching Materials and Resources, Classroom Environment, Teaching Methods and Techniques, and Assessment and Feedback, with a total of 40 questions.

Findings

Based on the research objectives, the following findings were drawn from this study

Status of English Learning Efficiency among College Students in Yunnan: The study found that the overall English learning efficiency of college students in Yunnan varies significantly. Specifically, students show different levels of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with some students performing weaker in listening and speaking, while having a relative advantage in reading and writing. This indicates that students' English learning efficiency differs across various skill areas.

Gender differences in English Learning Efficiency: The results indicate that female students generally have higher English learning efficiency than male students. Female students tend to show greater enthusiasm for English learning, particularly in terms of their involvement and attitudes, while male students exhibit stronger self-management and use of learning strategies. This highlights the role of gender differences in English learning efficiency, suggesting that male and female students differ significantly in their learning motivation and strategy use.

Differences in English Learning Efficiency across Different Grades: The study reveals that as students progress through their academic years, their English learning efficiency changes significantly. First- and second-year students tend to have lower learning efficiency, while third- and fourth-year students show higher efficiency. This may be linked to the students' growing familiarity with English learning, changes in their motivation, and the accumulation of learning strategies.

Impact of English Learning Motivation on Learning Efficiency: The study shows that the various dimensions of English learning motivation (purpose of learning, engagement, attitude, and expectations) have a significant impact on students' learning efficiency. Specifically, students with intrinsic motivation perform better in English learning, especially those motivated by personal interest and self-improvement. External motivations, such as career prospects and academic achievement, also contribute to enhancing learning efficiency.

Impact of English Teaching Methods on Learning Efficiency: The study found that various aspects of English teaching methods (teaching materials and resources, classroom environment, teaching methods and techniques, assessment and feedback) have a substantial impact on students' learning efficiency. In particular, the optimization of teaching methods and classroom environments significantly boosts students' learning efficiency, while teachers' feedback and assessment approaches positively influence students' learning motivation and outcomes.

In conclusion, this study reveals multiple factors affecting English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan, including learning motivation, gender, academic grade, and teaching methods. These findings provide strong support for improving and optimizing English teaching practices in colleges in Yunnan.

Discussion

The discussion of this study explores the broader implications of the findings, offering insights into how motivational factors, teaching methods, and contextual influences shape English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan, China. The study emphasizes the complex and interrelated nature of these factors, suggesting that a one-dimensional approach to language education is insufficient in addressing the diverse needs of students.

One key takeaway from the findings is the significant role of motivation in enhancing English learning efficiency. The research highlights that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive students' engagement with the language. While intrinsic motivation, such as personal interest and the desire for self-improvement, is important, extrinsic factors like career prospects and academic achievement also play a substantial role. These findings suggest that educators should focus on nurturing students' intrinsic motivation by creating a learning environment that promotes autonomy, self-directed learning, and meaningful connections to students' personal goals.

The study also reveals the profound impact of teaching methods on learning efficiency. Effective teaching strategies, particularly those that emphasize communication and task-based learning, have been shown to promote deeper engagement with the language. Approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching

(TBLT) align well with the need for practical, real-world application of language skills. The research suggests that educators should adopt such methods to create an interactive and engaging classroom environment that encourages students to use the language in authentic contexts.

Another important aspect revealed by the study is the influence of gender on learning efficiency. The findings suggest that while women may exhibit higher levels of interest in English learning, men tend to demonstrate stronger learning strategies and self-management skills. This underscores the importance of recognizing gender-based differences and adapting teaching methods accordingly to ensure that both male and female students receive the support they need to succeed in language learning.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the need to consider students' developmental trajectories over time. As students progress through their academic years, their learning motivation, self-efficacy, and adoption of learning strategies evolve. The research suggests that educators should take a longitudinal approach to teaching, adapting their methods to cater to students' changing needs at different stages of their academic careers.

Finally, the findings stress the significance of a supportive learning environment in fostering language acquisition. Factors such as teacher quality, school culture, and family support were identified as key determinants of students' English learning outcomes. The study calls for a collaborative approach among educators, policymakers, and families to create a holistic learning ecosystem that nurtures students' linguistic development and academic success.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence English learning efficiency among college students in Yunnan, China, offering practical recommendations for educators and policymakers. By recognizing the interplay of motivation, teaching methods, gender differences, and developmental progress, this research lays the groundwork for designing more effective and inclusive language education strategies.

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