

Recent Development of Research on Foreign Language Learning Motivation

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Based on the definition of motivation, this thesis takes the material of the core journals of foreign languages over the past 10 years, analyzes the research content, research subjects, and research methods, through the research on the recent development of foreign language learning motivation, and aims to provide some teaching implications for the future English teaching.

Keywords: foreign language learning, motivation, English teaching

Introduction

Learning motivation is one of the critical emotional factors among foreign language learning. It is the internal reason to promote students' learning activities and it's also a strong power to motivate and guide students' learning. According to Jaokobvits' research results, it shows that the main factors that affect foreign language learning are talent, learning motivation, intelligence, and other factors; they share respectively 33%, 33%, 20%, and 14%. Wang Qiang (2009) concludes that language learning motivation is of great significance.

A Review on Foreign Language Learning Motivation Studies

In the late 1950s, Gardner, a Canadian applied linguist, as a pioneer in the study of foreign language learning motivation, put up with the notion of motivation. From the perspective of sociolinguistics, he divided foreign language learning motivation into instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, and believed that foreign language learning motivation should include four aspects: goal; effortful behavior; attitude; a desire to attain the goal. After that, the research experienced several periods including cognitive situation model, process-oriented model, self-system model, and social dynamic model (Gao, 2013; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2014; Li & Yang, 2015). Dornyei et al. (2014) put up with new Directed Motivational Current(s) (DMC(s)) which integrates the above characteristics and marks the latest progress in the study of foreign language motivation theory.

Domestic research on learning motivation originated in the 1980s. Dai Weidong (1992) elaborated on how to stimulate students' foreign language learning motivation based on the national conditions at that time. In the academic circle, it is generally believed that Gui Shichun (1986) took the initiative to analyze the learning motivation of English majors from the perspective of social psychology. In the early 1990s, Wu Yan and other scholars conducted a series of empirical studies on English majors. Since the 21st century, great progress has

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been made in the study of foreign language learning motivation in China. Qin Xiaoqing and Wen Qiufang (2002) studied the internal structure, changing rules, and characteristics of students' learning motivation.

From the perspective of directed motivational currents, Chang Haichao (2017) used trajectory equivalent modeling to explore the change mechanism of learning motivation in the four-year undergraduate study of 10 English majors through two-stage retrospective interviews. The results implied that college English teaching should pay more attention to the dynamic change and individual variation of students' learning motivation, create a good learning atmosphere, and maximize the intensity of learning motivation. Fu Bei (2019) conducts a diachronic analysis on the self-concept development of three Non-English major students in oral English learning and puts forward some practical suggestions for oral English teaching. Focusing on periods of unusually intense and enduring motivation experienced by L2 learners of newly-built college, Ning Jiangeng and Cai Jinting (2019) studied whether core characteristics of DMCs can be identified in participants' descriptions of sustained motivated behavior, thereby considering the validity of the DMC construct through interview-based case study. The result indicates that the DMC construct captures a unique form of motivation worthy of investigation on the individual and group levels.

The General Trend of Studies on Foreign Language Learning Motivation

In China National Knowledge Internet, the author inputs the foreign language learning and motivation in the standard search box of the keyword, accurately finding out 60 theses from 2009 to 2018, among which 36 journal articles, 21 master's theses, one doctoral thesis, and two other articles. From 2009 to 2018, the number of literatures on foreign language learning motivation changed dynamically every year, but the overall trend was on the rise. This decade's theses focused on the study of English learning motivation, but also involved some studies of other languages and language studies of ethnic minorities.

Research Subject of Foreign Language Learning Motivation

In this decade, the research subject of foreign language learning motivation is very extensive, involving graduate student motivation to learn foreign language, an empirical study of foreign language learning motivation on undergraduate students, study on language learning motivation of high school students and foreign language learning motivation in junior high school students, research on foreign language learning motivation of higher vocational students. Among these studies, there are 23 undergraduate studies, accounting for 38.3% of the total number, and the data are listed in the following (see Table 1).

Table 1

The Distribution of the Theses of Foreign Language Learning Motivation (2009-2018)

Research object	Quantity	Percentage
Undergraduate students' learning motivation	23	38.3%
High school students' language learning motivation	6	10%
Junior high school students' foreign language learning motivation	5	8.3%
Higher vocational students' foreign language learning motivation	10	16.66%
Minorities' foreign language learning motivation	2	3.3%
Others	14	23%

Research Content of Learning Motivation

From 2009 to 2018, the research on foreign language learning motivation can be divided into seven categories, namely, review, theoretical research, application research, modeling research, research on influencing factors, research on the relationship between learning motivation and academic performance and teaching strategies, and research on the relationship between learning motivation.

Theoretical research mainly based on theoretical comparison of social psychology and psychology. Gardner and Lambert (1959) believed that there are mainly two categories of learning motivation: One is instrumental motivation and the other is integrative motivation. Scholars in China think that this classification of motivation has some shortcomings and thus makes some supplements and amendments. In 1998, Hua Huifang pointed out that it was biased to divide motivation into instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, which were not suitable for China's situation. Yang Lianrui illustrated that 80% of the motivation of Chinese learners belonged to the certification motivation (Yang et al., 2007, p. 171).

The study on modeling of learning motivation. Since 1990s, many scholars at home and abroad to realize Gardner motivation research have certain limitations, so they established a variety of learning motivation model from education psychology, cognitive psychology, construction of psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and other multi-disciplinary perspective to research, providing many useful research paradigms for motivation research. Yang Lianrui and Li Shaopeng (2009) point out that Dornyei and Otto constructed a learning motivation process model which based on the relationship between motivation and time, and then modify the model. Moreover, Dornyei thinks that "self-concept should be combined with the study of learning motivation so as to propose a new mode of research on second language acquisition, namely the L2 self-system".

There are few empirical studies on the second language motivational self system in China and they are still in infancy. Viewing from the perspective of education environment, Zhou Songbo (2011) found that college students' English learning motivation consists of three levels of eight kinds of motives, including foreign language value which is an important factor to constitute the language level of motivation, and learning attitude and faith which are one of the most important factors that constitute the learners' level of motivation. Qin Lili and Dai Weidong (2013) innovatively applied Vygotsky's activity theory and Dornyei's motivational self-system to construct a motivational self-system model for college English learning, aiming to provide enlightenment and reference for college English teaching reform.

Liu Fengge (2012) studied a large sample of 956 students of different ages in different parts of China. The results show that for those who study poor, the L2 learning experience is a best measure of motivation, while for those who learn well, the ideal L2 self is more effective. Another study conducted by Liu (2012) shows that the ideal second language self has a stronger correlation with learners' learning motivation than the integrative motivation. Yang Juan conducted a survey about a foreign student of Shandong University under the guidance of the second language self-motivation system, and the results are consistent with those obtained by Liu Fengge.

Similar to her research at Meiji University, Su Xiaoli studied a successful English learner named Bill through interviews, study notes, and blogs, and discovered the relationship between the ideal and the should-be self and the learning experience. Similarly, Wei Xiaobao's research shows that the ideal L2 self is more closely related to active learning compared to the ideal second language self and second language learning experience,

and the construction of the ideal second language self can promote learners' active learning.

The study on influencing factors of foreign language learning motivation. In order to investigate the influencing factors of foreign language learning motivation, Long Shaoyun (2010) points out that the maximum principal factors that affect the whole college students' learning motivation are that the self-efficacy is not strong enough and English foundation is not good enough. And anxiety is a common factor affecting foreign language learning motivation. In addition, Yuan Pinghua (2012) discussed the influence of college English teaching (CBI) based on subject content on students' learning motivation and anxiety, and found that CBI teaching is helpful to improve students' emotional factors and improve learning motivation.

The study on the relationship between learning motivation, academic performance, and teaching strategies. Different from the influencing factors on foreign language learning motivation, learning achievement and strategy are the results of learning motivation. Positive strategy and good performance can promote foreign language learning motivation positively, and vice versa.

Li Jiongying and Liu Penghui (2017) adopted 607 undergraduate students as the research objects. This study proved that teachers should pay close attention to the main factors such as students' learning goal, effort behavior, learning desire, and learning attitude. On the other hand, the influence of different majors, foreign language proficiency, gender, and other individual factors should also be considered.

The study on relationship between learning motivation and self-identity. Research on the relationship between learning motivation and self-identity in China is still in its infancy. Wei Xiaobao (2013) points out that teachers should create a favorable environment, strengthen autonomous learning strategy training in foreign language teaching in classroom teaching, and guide students to build the ideal second language ego so as to improve students' foreign language learning autonomy.

Wu Hongyun and Bao Guiying (2013) studied the relationship between professional learning motivation and self-identity of English major postgraduates and found that learners' personal background factors have no obvious influence on their professional learning motivation and self-identity; the level of professional learning motivation can predict learners' self-identity to a certain extent.

Reflection and Implications

The research on foreign language learning motivation in China has developed from the initial introduction of foreign theoretical research to the comprehensive and new perspective research in the context of foreign language learning. Here are some implications:

1. Research should focus on the latest foreign research, but also need to take China's national conditions into consideration. The research should pay close attention to foreign research trends, actively follow up and learn from foreign language learning de-motivation and other related researches, and combine the study of China's national status, so as to promote the development of domestic motivation research topic.

2. Research methods can be compared longitudinally. The external research methods are specific, but there is a lack of longitudinal comparison between the learning motivation intensity of foreign language learners of different educational background and age.

3. The research perspective needs to be expanded. The research on foreign language learning motivation mainly focuses on college undergraduates; however, the age of foreign language learning in China is getting smaller and smaller, so the scope of research objects should be broader. Secondly, China is a multi-ethnic country. For minority students, foreign language may be their third language, so it is necessary for scholars to

study their foreign language learning motivation.

4. The sample is relatively small. Most of the results are based on empirical research, but due to the constraints of time, manpower, material resources, and other factors, most of the researchers of foreign language learning motivation in China adopt small samples, and there are few cross-school and cross-region cases. That's to say, this kind of small sample institute concluded may not suitable for all foreign language learners, so the research achievements in the practice application validation of effectiveness depend on the future research.

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