

Strategies for Stimulating and Sustaining Students' English Learning Motivation in Higher Vocational English Teaching

Han Jing

Suzhou Vocational Institute of Industrial Technology, Suzhou, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: In higher vocational education, the strength of students' motivation to learn English directly affects teaching effectiveness and the cultivation of their comprehensive English competence. This paper systematically explores the key issues in stimulating and sustaining students' learning motivation in higher vocational English teaching. First, it highlights the positive implications of strengthening learning motivation in terms of improving learning outcomes, facilitating career development, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and fostering autonomous learning abilities. Second, it conducts an in-depth analysis of the current practical challenges, including students' varying foundational levels, relatively rigid teaching models, ambiguous learning objectives, and external environmental distractions. Based on this, this paper proposes specific strategies such as creating authentic contexts, optimizing assessment mechanisms, clarifying learning goals, and enriching teaching resources. This study aims to provide theoretical and practical references for higher vocational English educators, promote the improvement of English teaching quality, and encourage students to engage actively in English learning.

Keywords: Learning Motivation; Practical Challenges; Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

English serves as a crucial tool for international communication and has gained increasing prominence against the backdrop of accelerating globalization. In response to this trend, higher vocational education, with its commitment to cultivating application-oriented technical talents, aims to foster students' English proficiency, broadening their career prospects and strengthening their competitive edge in the global arena. However, higher vocational

students often experience a lack of learning motivation during the process of English learning. Therefore, conducting in-depth research on the strategies to stimulate and sustain students' English learning motivation in higher vocational English teaching is of critical importance to the improvement of teaching quality and student development. It can not only improve the current state of English teaching but also lay a solid foundation for students' future career development.

2. The Importance of Stimulating and Sustaining Students' English Learning Motivation in Higher Vocational English Teaching

2.1 Enhancing Learning Outcomes and Strengthening Knowledge Acquisition

Learning motivation serves as an engine that propels students on their learning journey. Strong motivation enables students to invest more time and energy in English learning. Higher vocational English courses encompass a rich array of vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students with positive learning motivation will actively explore word usage, delve into grammatical rules, and improve their language skills through repeated practice.

This proactive learning approach, compared to passive reception, enables students to master knowledge more efficiently, significantly improve their English academic performance, and build a solid linguistic foundation for subsequent professional studies and career development.

2.2 Facilitating Career Development and Broadening Employment Pathways

Higher vocational education is closely aligned with market demands, placing great emphasis on students' professional competence and career competitiveness. A good command of English

constitutes a significant advantage in today's workplace, opening doors to greater career opportunities and professional advancement. Many positions require practitioners to possess certain English communication skills. Students with strong English learning motivation strive to improve their English skills and obtain relevant English certificates, such as the CET certificates or Business English Certificates. These competencies and certificates significantly enhance students' competitiveness in the job market, enabling them to secure more high-quality employment opportunities, engage in foreign-related work relevant to their majors, and ultimately broaden their career development paths and achieve higher-quality employment outcomes.

2.3 Deepening Cross-Cultural Understanding and Fostering Comprehensive Personal Growth

English is not merely a tool language but also a carrier of diverse cultures. Stimulating and sustaining students' English learning motivation helps them to access and understand the cultures, histories, arts, and other aspects of English-speaking countries. Through immersion in English literary classics, films, and music, students can experience the distinctiveness of various cultures, thereby broadening their intellectual horizons and fostering a more inclusive cultural mindset. When communicating and cooperating with people from different cultural backgrounds, students with sound cultural literacy are better able to understand and respect others, avoid cultural conflicts, and demonstrate well-rounded comprehensive qualities and an international perspective.

2.4 Cultivating Autonomous Learning Ability and Achieving Lifelong Learning

In an era of rapid knowledge renewal, the ability to engage in lifelong learning is of paramount importance. Stimulating and sustaining students' learning motivation contributes to the cultivation of their autonomous learning abilities. When students develop intrinsic motivation for English learning, they will proactively formulate study plans, select learning methods, monitor the learning process, and evaluate learning outcomes. For example, they may use online learning platforms to engage in independent English courses and conduct targeted training based on their weak areas. This autonomous learning

ability will accompany students throughout their lives, enabling them to independently acquire new knowledge and skills even after leaving school, adapt to changes in social development, achieve lifelong learning, and provide a robust guarantee for their personal continuous growth and development.

3 Analysis of Challenges in Stimulating and Sustaining Students' English Learning Motivation in Higher Vocational English Teaching

3.1 Students' Varied English Proficiency Levels

Higher vocational students come from diverse backgrounds, resulting in significant disparities in their English foundations. Some students have already established a solid English foundation in secondary school, possessing a considerable vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, and are able to communicate and read in English with relative fluency. However, due to factors such as regional disparities in educational resources and individual learning experiences, other students have weak English foundations and insufficient mastery of basic vocabulary and grammar. Student diversity in the classroom makes it difficult for instructors to address individual learning paces and needs. While proficient learners may lose interest due to insufficient challenge, less prepared students often experience frustration and declining motivation. Such disparities collectively hinder the cultivation and maintenance of overall learning motivation.

3.2 Limitations of Traditional Teaching Models

Traditional higher vocational English instruction is characterized by teacher dominance and monotonous teaching methods, while opportunities for real-world communication call for considerable improvement. These features collectively dampen student enthusiasm, fall short of addressing varied learning preferences, and foster a sense of dullness toward English study. As a result, both the cultivation and maintenance of learning motivation are compromised, ultimately hindering the improvement of students' overall English competence.

3.3 Students' Unclear Learning Objectives

Many higher vocational students, upon enrollment, lack a clear understanding of their future career plans, resulting in ambiguous English learning objectives. They fail to recognize the importance of English learning for their professional development and career growth, merely regarding it as a routine general education course and engaging in passive learning simply to meet academic requirements. Such vague learning objectives lead to a lack of intrinsic motivation, making it difficult for students to fully commit themselves to learning. For example, when encountering difficulties in the English learning process, students without clear goals are prone to giving up. Meanwhile, the absence of definite learning objectives also makes it difficult for students to formulate reasonable study plans, preventing them from improving their English abilities in a targeted manner, which further affects the stimulation and maintenance of learning motivation.

3.4 Ambiguity in Students' English Learning Objectives

Many higher vocational students enter college without a clear career aspirations, which in turn leads to ambiguous English learning objectives. They fail to see the vocational relevance of English and treat it as a passive requirement rather than a meaningful pursuit. Such unclear objectives weaken intrinsic motivation, reduce persistence in the face of difficulties, and prevent the formulation of effective study plans. Consequently, both the emergence and maintenance of learning motivation are adversely affected.

4. Strategies for Stimulating and Sustaining Students' English Learning Motivation in Higher Vocational English Teaching

4.1 Optimizing Instructional Content and Design to Enhance Learning Motivation

To revitalize traditional teaching, teachers should tailor English content to students' majors and design profession-specific workplace scenarios for classroom practice. In business English instruction, for example, business negotiation scenarios should be constructed, with students assuming different roles and engaging in business communication in English, from product introduction and price negotiation to contract signing, all modeled on actual business processes.

Such context creation enables students to experience the practicality of English in practice, transforming abstract knowledge into concrete application. Through hands-on experience, students can gain a deeper understanding of the rules for using English in specific scenarios and enhance their learning interest. Meanwhile, the utilization of multimedia resources should be promoted to create an immersive English learning environment, stimulate students' desire to actively learn English, encourage more active participation in classroom activities, and thereby enhance learning motivation.

4.2 Optimizing the Evaluation System and Strengthening Learning Confidence

A scientific and reasonable evaluation system is essential for stimulating learning motivation. Rather than relying solely on examination scores, diversified assessment should be adopted. Formative assessment may include classroom performance, homework quality, and group participation. In evaluating classroom performance, attention should be paid to both the substance of students' contributions and their cognitive engagement. Homework assessment should consider not only accuracy but also effort and originality. Meanwhile, summative assessment can combine final examinations with project-based outcome presentations. Through comprehensive and objective assessment, students can recognize their progress and growth in the learning process, boost their confidence in learning English, and thereby stimulate sustained learning motivation.

4.3 Clarifying Learning Objectives and Stimulating Intrinsic Motivation

Teachers should guide students in setting clear English learning objectives that are directly linked to their career development. At the beginning of the course, the English requirements for different majors should be introduced—for example, nursing students need medical vocabulary and communication skills for foreign-related services. Teachers may then assist in formulating short-term objectives (e.g., vocabulary targets or exam completion) and long-term objectives (e.g., workplace English competence). Such goal-setting clarifies the value of English and cultivates intrinsic motivation. Regular progress monitoring and timely goal adjustments are also essential to sustain motivation over time.

4.4 Enriching Learning Resources and Expanding Learning Channels

With the development of information technology, diverse learning resources can meet the learning needs of different students and stimulate their learning motivation. Schools and teachers can integrate online and offline resources to build English learning platforms. Online high-quality open courses—such as excellent higher vocational English courses available on platforms like China University MOOC, covering specialized training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing—should be introduced. English learning Apps, such as Baicizhan and Liulishuo, can also be utilized, enabling students to practice vocabulary memorization and oral English anytime and anywhere. In-person English corners and English libraries should be pursued, providing materials such as English newspapers, magazines, and books. In addition, English club activities—such as English speech contests and English drama performances—should be organized.

The availability of rich learning resources and diverse learning channels allows students to choose learning methods based on their own interests and learning styles, expand their learning spaces, maintain their enthusiasm for English learning, and sustain their learning motivation.

5. Conclusion

The stimulation and maintenance of students' learning motivation in higher vocational English teaching are key to improving teaching quality and promoting student development. By gaining a thorough understanding of its importance, analyzing the difficulties encountered—such as

students' varying foundational levels and the limitations of current teaching models—and implementing targeted strategies, including creating authentic contexts and optimizing evaluation mechanisms, it is possible to effectively stimulate students' learning interest and enhance their motivation. This enables students to achieve favorable outcomes in English learning and lays a solid foundation for their career development and lifelong learning. Higher vocational English educators are expected to continue exploring and refining teaching practices, continuously improving instructional methods to better meet students' learning needs and elevate higher vocational English teaching to a higher level.

Reference

- [1] Jia Y F. A case study on the application of game-based learning in higher vocational English teaching[J]. Shanxi Youth, 2025(21).
- [2] Tang L. Problems and strategies of higher vocational English teaching[J]. English Square, 2024(2): 84-87. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1009-6167.2024.02.021.
- [3] Ma P L. Strategies for enhancing vocational college students' English learning interest: A case study of Guizhou Industry and Trade Vocational College[J]. Contemporary Education, 2025(17): 117-120.
- [4] Wang Y. A brief discussion on motivational teaching strategies in higher vocational English classrooms[C]//Proceedings of the Guangdong Education Association 2025 Annual Academic Conference. 2025.
- [5] Lian J Y. An analysis of breaking through and revitalizing higher vocational English teaching in the information age[J]. Overseas English, 2025(4).