

# Research on the Strategies of Stimulating Students' Motivation in Higher Vocational English Teaching

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**Abstract:** English, as a compulsory basic course for vocational college students, has also received increasing attention. In English teaching practice, it has been found that learning motivation is the internal driving force that directly drives English learning and plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of English learning. Therefore, educators find it crucial to cultivate, stimulate, and maintain the English learning motivation of vocational college students, and help them transition from "I want to learn" to "I want to learn." Learning motivation can not only guide students in their direction but also promote their hard work in learning. It is an essential driving force. The lack of motivation for vocational college students to learn English is a very important fundamental reason, and it is quite difficult to improve the level of learning motivation for this group. This is because overall, vocational college students have a low starting point, lack hard work, good learning habits, and a certain degree of self-learning ability. They also lack confidence in learning English well. To address these challenges, educators need to continuously improve the difficulty of the goal, stimulate students' exploration interest and learning motivation. In addition, after students achieve a goal, teachers should give timely praise, encouragement, and guidance for unfinished goals to enhance students' confidence.

**Keywords:** Vocational English teaching; Student motivation; Strategy

## 1. Introduction

With the acceleration of world economic integration, China's foreign exchange has expanded to all fields of economic and social development, and the demand for senior technical talents who master English skills is increasing day by day. Students in higher vocational colleges are becoming an important force in China's economic development, but their English level is generally not high, which is far from meeting the needs of society [1]. There are many reasons for their poor grades, and a lack of good learning motivation is one of the most important factors. In this context, English, as a compulsory basic course for students in higher vocational colleges, has attracted more and more attention. In English teaching practice, it is found that learning motivation is the internal motivation that directly promotes English learning and plays a vital role in English learning [2]. Therefore, the question of how to cultivate, stimulate, and maintain the English learning motivation of higher vocational students and help them change from "asking me to learn" to "asking me to learn" is very important. Learning motivation can not only guide students but also promote them to study hard. It is an essential motivation. Therefore, in the teaching process, teachers should not only ensure that students have positive learning motivation but also implement certain measures to protect students' learning motivation.

Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation caused by internal reasons such as learners' internal interest, curiosity, or achievement needs, which is an internal factor and can be divided into three categories: first, intellectual internal motivation, driven by the desire to explore new knowledge and improve knowledge levels [3-4]. The second is achievement-oriented internal motivation, driven by the desire to accomplish a task or goal. The third is stimulating internal motivation, driven by the excitement or pleasure generated in the learning process. External motivation refers to the motivation aroused by external rewards, punishment, or the fear of failing exams. Because English is a language, language teaching is different from other courses, so teachers need to make some efforts [5]. The lack of English learning motivation among higher vocational students is a very important basic reason, and it is quite difficult to improve the level of learning motivation of this group. Generally speaking, higher vocational students have a low starting point, do not study hard enough, lack good study habits, and lack certain self-learning ability. They also lack self-confidence in learning English well [6]. Therefore, how to arouse their enthusiasm for learning English, stimulate and cultivate their motivation for

learning English, is of great significance in guiding English teaching and improving the quality of English teaching.

## 2. Learning motivation

According to the description of modern psychology, motivation has four characteristics: "motivation," "orientation," "intensity," and "maintenance." Learning motivation is the direct driving force for students' learning, as well as the internal driving force for their learning. It can stimulate students' strong desire for knowledge and encourage them to persist in learning seriously, proactively, and persistently[7]. Motivation consists of three parts: the desire to achieve a certain goal, the effort to achieve that goal, and the sense of satisfaction within it. Generally speaking, these three parts complement each other and form the overall concept of motivation. However, in daily life, what people refer to as motivation often focuses on the first part, which is the hope of achieving a certain goal. This is not difficult to understand because goals are the key and the guide for action. Without goals, there can be no sense of effort or satisfaction. This article analyzes the cultivation of learning motivation among college students, as shown in Figure 1.

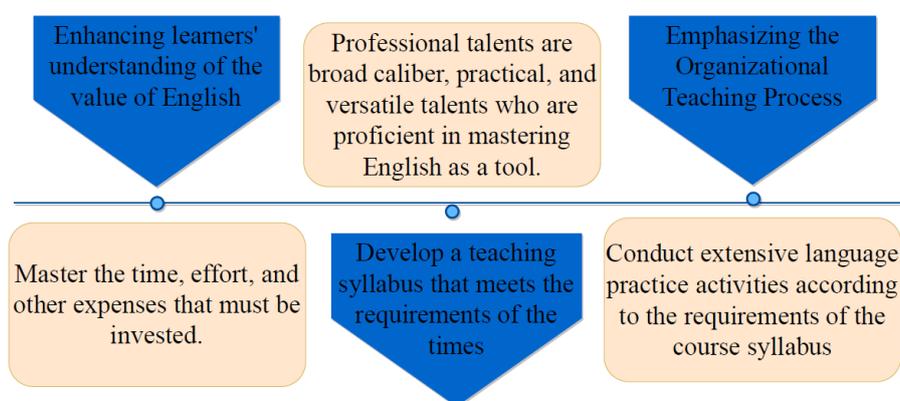


Figure 1: Cultivation of Learning Motivation for College Students

The stronger the learning motivation is, the greater the possibility of achieving the learning goal, and the learning effect will get twice the result with half the effort; On the other hand, when learning motivation is weak, learning is often regarded as a burden, and the learning effect will be greatly reduced accordingly [8]. Moreover, English learning motivation is also about one's attitude towards learning English, the desire to learn English, and the efforts made to learn English. As teachers, we should have insight into students' psychological world in English teaching and pay attention to cultivating, stimulating, and maintaining students' learning motivation to better promote their learning [9]. Different divisions of learning motivation share the same characteristics, including internal and external motivation. Both of these types of motivation have a far-reaching impact on second language acquisition, so teachers and students should fully consider and mobilize students' internal and external motivation in English learning during actual teaching, aiming to better improve students' English learning efficiency and learning results [10].

## 3. The Current Situation and Motivation of English Learning among Vocational College Students

### 3.1 Students' own learning motivation

Motivation is considered one of the important determinants of successful foreign language learning. A high level of motivation results in good learning outcomes for learners; on the contrary, the effect is poor. It can be seen that motivation plays an important role in English teaching because it is a combination of the internal driving force that generates learning goals and the joyful attitude that generates language learning. The motivation of students themselves refers to internal motivation, which is the learning motivation generated by their subjective consciousness. For example, some students like English and are interested in the customs and cultures of English-speaking countries before studying English seriously. They find a sense of achievement and satisfaction in achieving their own needs. English learning is also a platform to showcase one's abilities and style. Solid basic English skills, fluent and authentic spoken English, and excellent writing and translation skills often receive

recognition from teachers and envy from classmates. At this point, students can gain confidence, a sense of achievement, and satisfaction, and thus gain a lasting passion and internal motivation to learn English.

Students actively engage in learning for scholarships or to acquire a certain professional skill. They are stimulated by external environments or conditions to learn under pressure, which is called external learning motivation, such as guidance from their elders or praise from teachers. In fact, internal and external learning motivations can coexist. When stimulating students' learning motivation, teachers should pay attention to coordinating the relationship between internal and external learning motivations to ensure that they can truly promote students' initiative and enthusiasm in learning, and improve their learning efficiency. Some students believe that learning can broaden their horizons and improve their learning abilities, so they strive to learn English. In addition, a small number of students believe that learning English well can increase their sense of achievement and believe that excelling in English is a way to gain students' respect and teachers' love. These examples indicate that the intrinsic motivation of vocational college students to learn English is simple and clear.

### ***3.2 Learning motivation given by the outside world***

Due to the external pressure on students, they usually turn the pressure into motivation to study. For example, some students think that English can meet the needs of future work, and learning English well is of great help to their future. The importance of English in our life is self-evident. It is much more convenient for people who know English to make friends with foreign countries, surf the Internet, download, listen to and watch English news programs, read English newspapers, magazines, and books, and appreciate the unique charm of original blockbusters. Some students clearly stated that learning English well is to pass CET-3, and their motives are relatively clear. In addition, a small number of students think that they are studying English for further study abroad, which may be due to the low learning level of higher vocational students, resulting in relatively few such students. However, college students' learning motivation changes with different social living conditions, educational influence, and personal life experiences, showing their own age development characteristics. First of all, the interest in learning is low. Secondly, the achievement motivation is low. Many college English learners have experienced too many failures in the process of English learning, so they finally dare not expect to succeed in English learning. Teachers using the same teaching method for a long time will make students lose interest in this teaching method, and their learning motivation may disappear. Students' long-term learning motivation is called indirect motivation because it is driven by their personal future goals or their parents' expectations. This kind of learning motivation places a strong test on students' personal willpower, as it requires students to overcome difficulties persistently; otherwise, they may give up halfway.

## **4. Strategies for Motivating Students in Vocational English Teaching**

### ***4.1 Clear learning objectives***

When setting learning goals, teachers should fully pay attention to the learning level of each student. Learning a language is most afraid of lacking a language environment. There is no English atmosphere in class, and students feel bored and disengaged. The use of audio, video, or multimedia teaching can provide students with a vast visual space, create language scenarios for their English learning, and stimulate their interest in learning. Teachers can also try conducting thematic debates, discussions, etc. The main value of group activities lies in their ability to stimulate natural speech activities through discussion and conversation. For non-English major students in vocational colleges, there are often two obvious characteristics in English learning: firstly, the focus of learning tends to be on professional courses, with less time and energy spent on English learning; Secondly, the basic level of students varies. Based on these two points, when setting learning goals, teachers should, on the one hand, pay attention to combining the English grades of each student to achieve "tailoring." Teachers can record errors in the speaker's language expression and use, prompting them to correct and improve. Practice has shown that this move will also enhance students' sense of responsibility for their English learning. Learning objectives can be achieved through extracurricular incentive strategies, which can be described from three aspects, as shown in Figure 2.

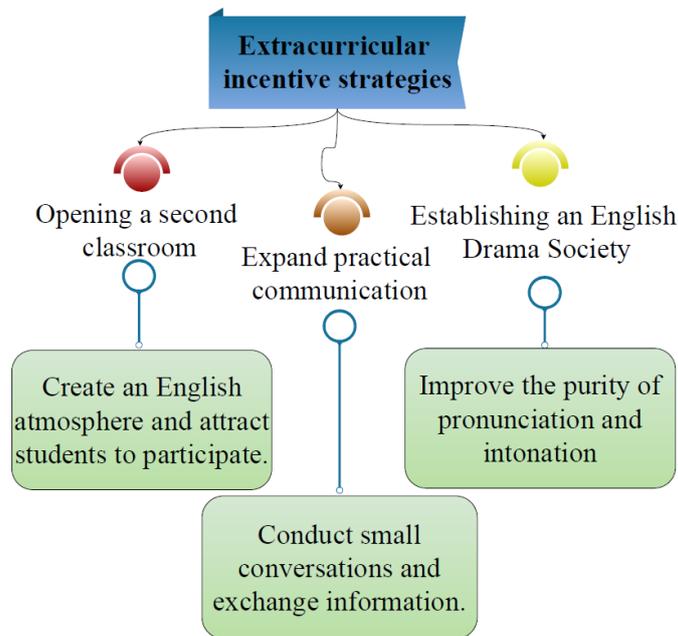


Figure 2: Extracurricular Incentive Strategies

For vocational college students, most of them have a weak foundation in English. Due to the influence of high school learning patterns and habits, most students have a strong psychological attachment to teachers for a considerable period of time after entering university. They almost rely on their English learning on the teacher, do not know how to exert their subjective initiative in learning, and lack practical learning goals and effective learning strategies. To address this, teachers should develop short-term goals that are less challenging and then continuously increase the difficulty of the goals to stimulate students' exploration interest and learning motivation. In addition, after students achieve a goal, teachers should give timely praise, and encourage and guide unfinished goals to enhance students' confidence.

#### 4.2 Improve teachers' quality

A qualified foreign language teacher should possess four qualities: a good personality, strong foundational foreign language skills, extensive knowledge, including linguistics, pedagogy, and psychology, effective classroom management abilities, and sound teaching methods. Only with these abilities can teachers provide targeted instruction, continually improve their own quality, and lay the foundation for establishing a positive teacher image. Teachers' professional quality and teaching ability are important factors that stimulate students' interest in learning, ignite their enthusiasm for learning, and facilitate effective teaching. Schools should prioritize the cultivation and enhancement of English teachers' professional quality and provide teachers with as many opportunities for professional development and further study as possible. Regular teaching observation meetings and seminars should be held to discuss and exchange teaching methods. Additionally, classroom teaching modes should be reformed to align with students' interests and focus on improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Teachers should address students' different emotional challenges, helping them identify the underlying reasons, build self-confidence, and discover suitable learning methods. For example, some students may have a weak foundation in English, face significant psychological burdens, struggle with low learning efficiency, and find it difficult to achieve results in their studies. On the other hand, some students may exhibit impatience, a strong desire for quick success, and limited understanding of the long-term and challenging nature of foreign language learning, leading to confusion. Teachers can continually adapt their approaches and introduce innovative methods to pique students' curiosity and maintain their attention. In one instance, the author suggested that students engage in role-play by simulating scenarios like press conferences and business negotiations, significantly boosting their enthusiasm for speaking in class.

## 5. Conclusions

With the improvement of their level and the accumulation of experience, students can also be

encouraged to create their own works. This can greatly stimulate students' enthusiasm for practicing oral English in their spare time, and by using points to cover various areas, it enriches the English learning atmosphere of the entire class. While internalizing English knowledge and exercising oral communication skills, students can also further enhance their awareness of learning the culture of English-speaking countries. Teachers should develop scientifically reasonable and feasible learning motivation stimulation strategies based on students' interests, levels, etc., to ensure that students can maintain full enthusiasm in English learning and ultimately achieve the expected teaching objectives. Teachers should refer to students' specific learning stages and conditions, provide phased learning methods for students, guide them to use scientific cognitive strategies for learning, and help them achieve satisfactory learning outcomes. Teachers need to encourage and praise students in the classroom, pay attention to their feelings, take different measures for different students, respect all students, and create a good classroom atmosphere to improve students' academic performance. At the same time, it is necessary to constantly create a sense of freshness for students, satisfy their thirst for knowledge, and strive to use rich and interesting, logical teaching content and innovative and effective methods to make students personally understand the sense of achievement and pleasure in acquiring knowledge. Only in this way can we truly transition from "wanting me to learn" to "wanting me to learn."

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