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A STUDY OF DIRECTED MOTIVATIONAL CURRENTS IN ORAL ENGLISH LEARNING

Based on the theory of Directed Motivational Currents, this study conducted a diachronic investigation on non-English majors with a case study approach and analyzes the development and changes of their motivation of oral English learning . The results show that the motivational dimensions such as goals or visions, facilitative structure and positive emotionality can significantly promote oral English learning. In college oral English teaching, stimulating, maintaining and protecting students' directed motivational currents can help to improve the quality of oral English teaching and students' learning efficiency.

Keywords: *Directed Motivational Currents; College English; oral English learning*

1. Introduction

Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) are stable, highly-intense motivational states that second language learners exhibit in the process of achieving their goals [4, p.97]. When learners are fully focused on a task, individual characteristics such as motivation, cognition, and emotion are fully integrated into that task, and the influence of external factors such as time and environment immediately disappears, thus putting learners in an optimal state of engagement [1, p.707]. This theory is based on the trend of change in complex dynamic systems and is a dynamic research result on motivation, mainly including vision, facilitative structure and positive emotionality [2, p.40], thus provides a new perspective for motivation research. However, there are not sufficient

studies analyzing the developmental changes of oral learners' motivation under this perspective, and further work is needed. Most non-English majors are affected by various factors such as the interference of native language, different thinking patterns and psychological factors in the process of learning spoken English. They show a lack of motivation or even a fading of motivation. Therefore, this paper analyzes the developmental changes of non-English majors' motivation in the process of learning spoken English through a case study from three dimensions within the framework of directed motivational currents theory, and constructs an effective application strategy for teaching spoken English in college, so as to help improve the quality of spoken English teaching and students' learning efficiency.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following two specific research questions.

1) What are the characteristics and dynamic change patterns of the three dimensions of directed motivational currents in oral learning among non-English majors? What factors influence their characteristics and changes?

2) How do the directed motivational currents of non-English majors affect their speaking learning behaviors and outcomes?

2.2 Research Subjects

The subjects of this study are three non-English undergraduate students in a university in China. They have the primary learning goals of passing the written and oral exams of college English test band 4 and 6, in addition to each student's own speaking learning goals.

2.3 Research Methods and Data Collection

Data collection for this study lasted 3 semesters. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of them, with an average interview time of 30 minutes each. The researcher recorded each interview, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim after the interview with their consent. In addition, records of the their in-class and out-class activities, speaking test scores and written summaries were collected for this study.

2.4 Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher categorized the data of the three subjects and used the “thematic analysis” method, including “personal vision”, “immediate personal goals”, “participation in English speaking activities”, “usual behavior” and “positive feedback”. The data analysis was framed in terms of the three main dimensions of directed motivational currents theory.

3. Research Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the thematic analysis, it is clear that the three subjects experienced a prominent currents of directed motivation during the three semesters following their enrollment in college, and their goal or vision, facilitative structure, and positive emotionality toward learning spoken English were more significant, which then had a direct impact on their engagement and effectiveness in learning spoken English.

3.1 Goal or Vision Orientation

Goal or vision orientation means that learners formulate a goal or vision as the forward direction of motivated behavior. Only goal or vision orientation can help learners mobilize various learning resources and develop their motivation. So it is the most important feature and component of this theory and is a prerequisite for the generation of motivational currents [2, p.42]. In this study, the three subjects had a large difference in goal or vision orientation. In the interview, student A's goal was to pass the college English oral test band Four and Six, as well as to get good grades in the oral tests in her college English courses. She wanted to pursue her further studies in graduate school. Student B had a clear vision for his oral English learning. He had the experience of traveling to Korea with his mother before going to college: “I can communicate in English because I don’t know Korean. My mother doesn’t know English, so I felt like I was the one she relied on at that time. In the future, besides traveling, there will be more opportunities to study or even work abroad. There are also many opportunities within the university to participate in English speeches and debate competitions, to listen to English lectures where you can directly learn first-hand advanced knowledge and skills from abroad and expand your horizons”. Student C’s

spoken English has a distinct accent. His vision and goal is to get rid of his English accent. The clear vision and specific goals had a very positive effect on the three subjects' development of oral English. They each practiced and improved their oral skills by listening to English lectures, participating in speech contests and English club activities.

3.2 Facilitative Structure

The facilitative structure refers to the behavioral domain of foreign language learning motivation, which mainly consists of routine behavior and progress check [4, p.100]. The three subjects talked about the daily practice of speaking English as an essential part of their lives. In order to adequately prepare for various English oral tests, student A consulted a lot of materials and wrote many scripts on the speaking topics. Student B practiced oral English every day. Student C's goal was to correct his pronunciation and improve his intonation by following and imitating the speeches of native speakers.

The second element that drives the directed motivation currents forward is the dimension of subgoals that provide a series of routine checks, which serve to track progress and act as proxy goals and evaluation criteria [6, p.73]. Student A believes that in the second semester, her spoken English has improved greatly through her preparation and practice: "The teacher has a high opinion of my speaking in class. The output was also highly evaluated. At that time, I felt that I was working in the right direction. The next task is to continue the speaking training by this method, keep the good habits and practice more." After Student B's daily self-training on the speaking topics and active participation in class, his accuracy of language expression has improved significantly and grammatical errors have gradually decreased. With advanced vocabulary and complex sentences having been used more frequently, he is more logical and organized, and the content of his expressions is more profound. At the same time, he learned to use body language and eye contact appropriately in oral communication, as well as skills such as how to attract the attention of the audience and adjust the speed of his speech according to the audience's reaction. Student C spent about two semesters on improving his English pronunciation. During this period, he

actively communicated with the teacher after speaking in class and oral tests. His improvement received progress checks and positive feedback from the teacher. His perception of the speaking ability was improved and he gained confidence at the same time.

3.3 Positive Emotionality

Positive emotionality is a continuum, radiating and positive emotional feeling that is important for maintaining the intensity of directed motivational currents. From the interviews, it is clear that all three subjects were accompanied by different degrees of positive emotions during the motivational continuum. For example, Student A was very happy after getting an A+ in the college English oral test and believed that she was reaching her goal little by little and felt a sense of accomplishment with each goal she reached. She also scored high in the speaking tests of the usual formative assessment with tasks such as answering questions and discussions, feeling happy by receiving positive feedback from the teacher. Student B became more comfortable in communicating with teachers and students in class and with foreign students in the English corner. He says that the fluency of communication after speaking practice gives him a feeling of joy and excitement. Student C is more confident in expressing himself after having improved his pronunciation through repeated training.

4. Conclusion and Implication

This study corroborates the directed motivational currents theory through the analysis of interviews with three individual learners of college English. It was found that specific and feasible learning goals play a positive role in the development of motivation for oral English learning. Many scholars advocate that the relevance of language learning to learners' present or future lives should be established [3, p.6; 7, p.547]. This corroborates the effectiveness of vision strategies. The study also found that teachers' progress checks and positive feedback can enhance learners' perceptions and confidence in their speaking abilities, resulting in a sense of accomplishment. They are free from the bondage of anxiety generated by evaluation and comparison, and gain a positive and clear self-concept of English speaking learning[5, p.56] .

The results of this study have some implications for teaching spoken English. First, teachers should help learners set clear and directed goals or visions to stimulate the generation of directed motivational currents. Learners should be encouraged to put continuous effort into desired goals and worthwhile tasks to continuously improve their self-efficacy until their ideal self, i.e., vision, is realized. Second, teachers should help learners generate and use facilitative structures to maintain the strength of directed motivational currents. Teachers should help learners dynamically adapt their study habits to their goals, assist them in developing and implementing targeted schedules, monitor their task completion, and provide positive feedback. Finally, teachers should help learners generate positive emotions and protect the momentum of directed motivational currents by encouraging a sense of well-being and accomplishment. Stimulating, maintaining, and protecting students' directed motivational currents can help improve the quality of oral English teaching and students' learning effectiveness.

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英语口语学习中的定向动机流研究

本研究以定向动机流为理论基础，以个案研究的方法对非英语专业大学生口语学习动机的发展变化进行了历时考察分析。研究表明，目标或愿景、促成性结构、积极情感等动机维度对英语口语学习产生明显的促进作用。在大学英语口语教学中激发、维持并保护学生的定向动机流，有助于提高英语口语教学质量和学生的学习效率。

关键词：定向动机流；大学英语；口语学习

