

# The Influence of College English Teachers' Teaching Styles on Students' Class Participation and Learning Motivation

Peicheng Xiong

College of Humanities and Law, Beijing University of Chemical Technology, Beijing, 100029, China

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**Abstract:** The psychological aspects of college students' in-class English learning are one of the key topics of current research. Some researchers analyze that the teaching styles of college English teachers play a significant role in students' learning psychology. However, they tend to focus on studying and summarizing the impact of teaching styles on students' academic performance, with less research on factors such as class participation and learning motivation. Therefore, the research topic of this paper is the influence of college English teachers' teaching styles on students' class participation and learning motivation. The research method of this paper is literature review. The study finds that a motivating and approachable teaching style of college English teachers can enhance students' class participation and promote their learning motivation. It is suggested that college English teachers should adopt a passionate and friendly teaching style, explore students' learning psychology, and promote mutual growth in college teaching and learning.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As the most widely used language globally, English is an important component of British and American culture and a crucial tool for international scientific and cultural exchanges. Countless individuals are learning and researching this language every day, among whom a significant proportion are students. College students, as talents receiving higher education in a nation, are the hope for the nation's future. Especially among those who study English as a second language, learning English helps them establish a global perspective, enhance their cultural literacy, and actively respond to the challenges and opportunities of the era of globalization. Educators in the field of English language teaching widely believe that many activities in English in-class instruction can promote learners' cognitive abilities. Therefore, the influence of English teachers' teaching styles on students is self-evident. However, upon examining the actual state of English teaching in Chinese universities, there is a separation between teachers' instruction and students' learning, and in-class instruction does not reflect the philosophy of teacher-led and student-centered teaching, lacking interaction and not truly achieving effective teaching (Wang, 2016). Thus, the teaching styles of English teachers in Chinese universities are worth further study and

improvement. Previous researches have focused on the independent research of university English teachers' teaching styles. As for the research of the relationship between two variables, they usually focus on the influence of teaching styles on teaching effectiveness and academic performance (Santana-Monagas et al., 2024; Shaari et al., 2014). The influence of teaching styles on students' class participation and learning motivation has only been a small part, with little description. This article adopts a literature review method to summarize previous studies.

## 2 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH OBJECT

Student class participation is an important predictor for forecasting academic performance, learning motivation, academic well-being, and school success. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, class participation referred to students' psychological and physical investment in the learning process, including attention, interest, effort, and emotional engagement (Marks, 2000). Class participation is the quantification of students' participation in the classroom, mainly used for the expression of psychometric results. The definition above simply

divides class participation into physical and mental categories, which is somewhat rough and needs to be refined in practical use. Kong integrated the definition of class participation and proposed a more operational definition, believing that students' class participation is a dynamic combination of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional participation (Kong, 2003).

At present, international scholars have defined teaching styles from various different perspectives. For example, from the perspectives of teaching methods, teaching behavior, teachers' personal characteristics, outcome orientation, teacher-student interaction, and whether teachers motivate students, there are six views. The first perspective is from the angle of teaching methods, considering teaching style as the teaching methods that teachers prefer and frequently use (Smith & Renzulli, 1984). The second perspective cuts into teaching behavior, considering teaching style as a series of teaching behaviors adopted by teachers based on teaching content, teaching situations, and teaching time (Elliott, 1996). The third perspective starts from the personal characteristics of teachers, proposing that teaching style is defined as an external manifestation of personal characteristics and behaviors (Grasha, 1996). The fourth perspective is outcome-oriented, considering teaching style as the teaching approaches and methods that teachers frequently adopt under the premise of achieving the same teaching objectives (He et al., 2014). The fifth perspective emphasizes the interaction in the teaching process, viewing teaching style as a dynamic relationship (Guo & Xiao, 2015). The sixth perspective divides it into motivational and non-motivational teaching styles. These two teaching styles can be further divided into eight types, each with subtle differences that can affect the level of students' class participation (Aelterman et al., 2019). The influence of teachers' teaching styles on students' class participation has been confirmed by many studies (Ran & Zhou, 2016).

In the study of second language acquisition and foreign language learning, motivation, as a core individual difference factor, is the key driving force that initiates and sustains learning activities. Motivation is the internal psychological force or process that drives individuals to engage in specific behaviors to meet needs or goals. It not only propels learners towards long-term, challenging learning objectives but also directly affects learning outcomes. Types of motivation mainly include: integrative and instrumental motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, long-term and short-term motivation (Tang et al., 2020)

### 3 THE INFLUENCE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' TEACHING STYLES ON STUDENTS' CLASS PARTICIPATION

Ran and Zhou conducted research on "student participation" in college English teaching. The research objects were 200 non-English major students from a college of finance and economics, as well as 10 teachers who teach specialized courses in English (Ran & Zhou, 2016). The measurement methods used were online interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and classroom observations. In terms of data analysis methods, a deep analysis was conducted based on Allwright & Bailey's perspective on a rough classification of student class participation patterns, and a comparative analysis was performed on the results of the questionnaire survey.

The data analysis results are divided into two aspects. First, the level of student participation is low. More than 70% of the students consider themselves passive recipients in English teaching, while 30% consider themselves active participants. In terms of attitudes towards English classes, 45% of the students prefer discussion-based teaching methods, 25% prefer connection-and explanation-based teaching methods, 23% prefer situational participation-based methods, and only 7% prefer competitive scoring-based teaching methods. This indicates that students still tend to prefer teaching methods with strong participation in the classroom.

The research conclusion is that in college English classroom teaching, students' participation is low, their responses to questions posed by teachers in class are not proactive, they easily place themselves outside the classroom, and they cannot guarantee effective listening time in class, which poses a significant obstacle to the promotion of English teaching.

The study also has some research limitation. Its analytical method is somewhat simplistic and does not use professional statistical software for analysis. Moreover, it does not elaborate or adjust for the 200 students' majors in the survey subjects, avoiding the impact of subject differences on the research results, nor does it explain the gender ratio and students' English proficiency levels. Regarding the questionnaire, the study does not explain the source of the questionnaire or whether a pretest was conducted, lacking verification of the questionnaire's reliability and validity, which affects the accuracy of the results. For the classification framework used, it

may not cover all forms of class participation, such as cognitive and emotional engagement. Additionally, the sample size is small.

In summary, the study focuses on the English class participation of 200 non-English major students and 10 English-teaching teachers from colleges of finance and economics, using online interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations. The conclusion shows that, among the various teaching styles of college English teachers, whether it is discussion-based or connection-and-explanation-based teaching styles, students' class participation is low, hindering English teaching. However, the study has flaws, such as a simplistic analytical method, not considering subject and gender differences, and insufficient questionnaire reliability and validity.

Kou conducted a study on class participation of college English learners. The subjects of the study are freshmen from a comprehensive university who are not majoring in English, totaling 200 students (Kou, 2016). They come from 6 natural classes, representing various faculties, with a relatively even distribution across liberal arts, science, and engineering. The gender ratio is approximately 7:3. Based on their English placement test scores upon admission, the students are divided into high-level (L3) and low-level (L1) learners, with 100 in each category. In summary, the research objects are a diverse group of freshmen from a comprehensive university, covering different faculties, genders, English proficiency levels, and age ranges to ensure the breadth and representativeness of the study. The methods used for measurement are quantitative analysis: class participation questionnaire, and qualitative analysis: interviews and classroom observations.

Quantitative data collection was obtained through anonymous questionnaires from 200 students. The tool used was SPSS18.0. For analysis, descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were employed to analyze attitudes towards class participation, behaviors, and the impact of English proficiency and gender. Qualitative data collection was obtained through unstructured interviews (recordings, notes) and classroom observations (notes).

The interview subjects were 20 randomly selected participants from the questionnaire respondents, and the classroom observation subjects were all the students in the classes of the questionnaire respondents. For analysis, a thematic approach was used to organize and analyze the interview and observation data, supplementing the quantitative data. The data analysis process combined quantitative

and qualitative methods, ensuring comprehensive research. In terms of the results of data analysis, regardless of gender or English proficiency level, learners had relatively positive attitudes towards class participation, providing a solid basis for the widespread implementation of classroom activities. The differences between gender and language proficiency groups were not significant. As for the conclusions of the study, it was found that learners had relatively positive attitudes towards classroom participation, but gender and foreign language proficiency had no significant impact; the seven most common class participation behaviors adopted by students included asking classmates, taking notes, and actively participating in classroom interactive activities; the three main factors influencing class participation were: the teacher's teaching style, classroom topics, and the classroom learning atmosphere.

The limitations of the study are that the sample size is relatively narrow, only surveying 200 freshmen from one comprehensive university, which is not sufficient to generalize to a broader population of foreign language learners; additionally, the data for this study all come from learners, with little consideration given to the participation and attitudes of teachers. Therefore, future research could conduct larger-scale surveys and consider the class participation of both teachers and learners.

This study, which targeted 200 freshmen from a comprehensive university who are not majoring in English, used questionnaires (SPSS analysis), interviews, and classroom observations to explore attitudes towards class participation and influencing factors. It found that students had positive attitudes, with gender and foreign language proficiency having no significant impact, and that they often adopted seven types of participation behaviors. The main factors influencing class participation were the classroom topic, atmosphere, and the teacher's teaching style and methods. An encouraging teaching style, an active and lively classroom atmosphere, and interesting classroom topics promote student participation. In particular, interaction with classmates, such as asking questions, is important. At the same time, students' emotional engagement with English learning deepens. However, the study's sample size was narrow, and teachers were not fully considered.

Zhao conducted a study on the impact of teachers' teaching styles on the effectiveness of college English teaching. The commonality between this study and the previous two is that their subjects are all non-English major university students in one school, and

the measurement methods include questionnaires. Like the research objects in the first study, the students lack interest in learning English and motivation for learning. The difference is that in this study, the discrepancy in responses to the questionnaire between male and female students is greater than in the previous two studies.

The research objects are 116 freshmen and sophomores from a non-English major in a certain college, with slightly more males than females (Zhao, 2016). Their English proficiency includes those with excellent scores in the college entrance examination and those with poor English levels. Most students lack interest in English, and their learning motivation mainly comes from coping with exams. The method used for measurement is a questionnaire, and the analysis is obtained through observation.

From the perspective of data analysis, from the learning survey, there are 80 students with scores above 90 in the college entrance examination, of which 65% believe they lack learning motivation; 80% of the students position their learning motivation on exam levels, believing there is no fun in learning; 70% of the respondents believe they have not found a learning method suitable for themselves. From the questions about the influence of teachers' teaching styles on students, female students pay more attention to teachers' affinity, and teachers with affinity are more likely to stimulate students' learning motivation and class participation, and female students have considerable requirements for teachers' oral pronunciation and language fluency; while male students pay more attention to teachers' knowledge level.

The conclusion of the study is that teachers' teaching styles play a significant role in the teaching process, a good teaching style can motivate students to generate interest in learning and start autonomous learning; a bad teaching style can cause students to lose their enthusiasm for learning English, thereby learning passively.

The shortcomings of this study are, first, the sample range is limited to only one college, which is relatively narrow. Second, the data is only organized through Excel, lacking advanced statistical analysis methods. Moreover, the conclusion is not convincing, and the universality of the survey results cannot be determined.

This study targeted 116 non-English major freshmen and sophomores and found that most students lacked interest in English. The survey shows that among high-scoring students, 65% lack motivation, and 70% have not found a suitable learning method. Female students value teachers'

affinity, while male students value knowledge level. The conclusion points out that teachers' teaching styles affect students' interest in learning and class participation. A good affinity or high knowledge level or bad teaching style will have a completely different impact on students' class participation. However, the data analysis method of this study is relatively simple.

The subjects of the above studies are all non-English major university students in the same college, and the measurement methods include questionnaires. In the first study, regardless of the teaching style of the college English teacher, the students' class participation was low. In the last two studies, teaching styles that are motivational and have high affinity promote students' class participation. In all three studies, their sample range is relatively narrow.

#### 4 THE INFLUENCE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' TEACHING STYLE ON LEARNING MOTIVATION

Wan conducted research on the impact of interpersonal behavior of college English teachers on students' English learning motivation.

This survey was conducted among 772 students and 8 teachers in 16 sophomore English classes at two undergraduate universities in central China (with a student-teacher ratio of 6:4, 4 female teachers, and 4 male teachers) (Wan, 2017). The survey lasted for one semester. In terms of data analysis methods, this study used Mplus software to establish three multilevel models for the data, namely, the empty model, the covariate model, and the teaching model.

The data analysis results related to teachers' teaching style indicate that students with better grades have less confidence motivation in classes with teachers who have a higher level of dominant behavior.

According to the data results, it can be found that variables of students' learning motivation, such as enjoyment, relevance, confidence, and effort, can be enhanced by teachers' approachable behavior. The most affected by approachable behavior are students' effort motivation and confidence motivation. This suggests that the more approachable the teacher's teaching style is, and the more harmonious the relationship between the teacher and students is, the more willing students are to invest more energy in learning English and believe that their efforts will be rewarded. At the same time, teachers' dominant

behavior can also increase students' enjoyment in the English learning process and enhance their effort level. The most affected by teachers' dominant behavior is students' learning effort level; the stricter the teacher's teaching style is, the more effort students put in.

The shortcomings of this study lie in the very limited scope of the survey sample and only focusing on the impact of one variable, teachers' interpersonal behavior, on students' English learning motivation.

Jia did research on investigation and analysis of foreign language teachers' impact on college students' English learning motivation.

The subjects of this study are undergraduates from the English classes of the 2005 and 2006 cohorts at a certain college of metrology, including a survey on the motivation for learning English as a public course among undergraduates from different majors across the college, and a survey on the motivation for learning English among undergraduates majoring in English (Jia, 2008). A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 183 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 91.5%.

The methods of this study mainly include a questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews on the impact of teachers on students' English learning motivation. The design of the motivation questionnaire is mainly based on Dornyei's three-level foreign language learning framework theory, focusing on investigating 35 questions from three parts: teachers' personal characteristics, teaching behavior, and interpersonal behavior. The questionnaire answers use the Likert self-assessment scale. Data analysis was performed using SPSS 14.0, obtaining the average score and standard deviation for each strategy, and then descriptive statistics and significance analysis were conducted for each research question. The questionnaire is divided into three parts, with questions 1-6 being basic information about the respondents, and questions 7-14, 15-27, and 28-35 being surveys on teachers' personal characteristics, teaching behavior, and interpersonal behavior, respectively. In the data analysis of the 183 valid questionnaires, over 70% of the respondents believe that foreign language teachers will affect English learning motivation to some extent. Among the three sections, respondents believe that the impact of foreign language teachers on their English learning motivation is in the order of teachers' personal characteristics, teachers' interpersonal behavior, and teachers' teaching behavior.

The conclusion of the study is that the personal characteristics and teaching style of foreign language

teachers have the greatest impact on college students' learning motivation, while the smallest impact is on their teaching behavior, with interpersonal behavior in the middle. Teachers' specific motivational components are related to teachers' behavior, personality, and teaching style. Therefore, foreign language teachers need to continuously enhance their charm and personal cultivation. Firstly, they should have a solid foundation of language knowledge and be able to speak English fluently and idiomatically. Secondly, their teaching styles should be humorous and interesting, and they should possess a wide range of knowledge to share with students. Thirdly, they should adopt passionate and infectious teaching methods, demonstrating patience and meticulousness in dealing with students. Additionally, they should exhibit strong affinity, a serious and responsible professional spirit, and foster harmonious interactions with students. These qualities are essential for winning students' trust, stimulating their interest in learning, and promoting their English learning motivation. In summary, college English teachers need to improve their personal charm to make the in-class teacher-student relationship more harmonious.

The shortcomings are: this study only surveyed undergraduates from the 2005 and 2006 cohorts at a certain college of metrology, with a small sample size, unable to fully represent the English learning motivation of all college students.

Zhang and Du did a study on the types of college students' English learning motivation and their impact.

This study adopts the Q-method to systematically study college students' English learning motivation, exploring the types of college students' English learning motivation and their influencing factors (Zhang & Du, 2021). The following conclusions were drawn by analyzing the data using the PQ Method and Nvivo 12.0.: (1) There are mainly four types of college students' English learning motivation: future aspiration type, failure avoidance type, self-development type, and cultural interest type. (2) Factors affecting English learning motivation include teacher factors, learner factors, learning environment factors, family factors, and peer factors.

Teachers play an important role in the teaching process. Teaching styles, teaching methods, teacher feedback, teacher expectations, and teaching ability all have a certain impact on students' English learning motivation. For example, "Sometimes teachers lack innovation in their teaching styles, the class is monotonous, teachers mechanically explain knowledge points, lack classroom interaction, and the classroom atmosphere is too dull, which may be a

reason for students' learning motivation to decrease." (Excerpted from student 7 interview content) (Zhang & Du, 2021).

## 5 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

The research conclusion indicates that, in terms of the influence on class participation, most of the time, the teaching style of college English teachers plays a significant role in the teaching process. A good, motivational teaching style can create an active classroom atmosphere, prompting students to develop an interest in college English and actively participate in class, such as asking questions to classmates and taking notes. A poor teaching style can cause students to lose their enthusiasm for learning English, leading to passive learning. In individual cases, regardless of the teaching style adopted, students' participation in class is minimal, lacking interest. This shows that students' class participation is influenced by a complex combination of other factors.

In terms of the influence on learning motivation, teachers' behavior of showing closeness in the classroom can enhance students' motivation to work hard and their self-confidence motivation. Among the teaching styles of teachers, those that are approachable, have strong affinity, or are strict and have strong dominance promote students' learning motivation more evidently. If teachers are more approachable, the more harmonious the relationship between teachers and students, the more obvious the students' learning motivation. At the same time, the stronger the teachers' dominant behavior, the stronger the students' learning motivation, which can also promote their effort.

On the contrary, if teachers mechanically explain knowledge in terms of their teaching style, lacking interaction with students, or if their requirements for students are too lax, or even careless, students' learning motivation will decrease.

Therefore, it is suggested that college English teachers should continuously improve their personal cultivation and at the same time strengthen critical thinking, exploring novel teaching concepts (Amirian et al., 2023). They should use fluent and idiomatic English oral expression, a teaching style that is humorous and knowledgeable, a passionate teaching method, be patient and meticulous with students, and have a strong affinity, a serious and responsible professional spirit, and a harmonious relationship with students, paying attention to students' learning

psychology. All these are key to whether foreign language teachers can win students' trust, stimulate class participation, and promote students' English learning motivation.

The influence of college English teachers' teaching styles is not limited to these two factors. In future research, other influencing factors can be explored, and the interaction of various factors can be discussed.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This article reviews the influence of college English teachers' teaching styles on students' class participation and learning motivation. A good teaching style, such as one that is motivational and has strong affinity, increases students' class participation and promotes their learning motivation. Therefore, college English teachers should be proactive and not only improve their professional abilities, such as refining their teaching styles, but also pay close attention to students' mindset, connecting teaching and learning closely to form a good atmosphere led by teachers and centered on students. This article provides college English teachers with a certain reference, which helps them to improve their understanding of teaching styles and students' learning psychology, thereby improving their teaching styles.

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