Effects of the Dynamic Motivation English Teaching Model on EFL Learners' English Performance in China

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Abstract

This paper reports an experimental study on the effects of a dynamic teaching model on EFL learners' English proficiency. The subjects were 84 students from Anhui Polytechnic University, Anhui, China. The experimental group was treated with the dynamic teaching model while the control group was taught with the traditional teaching model. The research instrument included the National College English Test (CET4) and the IELTS oral test. The results of the between-group comparison demonstrated that the experimental group achieved as well as the control group in the written test, but the experimental group was significantly better than the control group in the oral test. The experimental group did not outperform the control group in receptive skills (reading, listening), but it was significantly superior in the productive skills (speaking, translation, composition) after one semester motivational teaching treatment.

Key words: Dynamic Motivational Teaching Model, Effect of Teaching, English Proficiency, Foreign language

Introduction

The dynamic motivation English teaching model is aimed to enhance students' L2 learning motivation, which in turn could be transformed into action in the L2 classroom setting and facilitated the improved L2 language proficiency taking place. Despite the increasingly frequent interaction among different countries in the world and learning English has become more and more important as a foreign language, lack of motivation still remains as one of the biggest challenges in EFL classrooms in China. Motivation, defined as the impetus to create and sustain intentions and goal-seeking acts (Wang 2012), is a term that cannot be overemphasized in English learning, because it determines to what extent a learner is willing to involve in an activity and his or her attitude towards English learning. It influences learners' autonomy, attention, effort, persistence, and the frequency of using learning strategies. In a word, it plays an important role in determining success or failure in any learning situation (Dörnyei et. al., 2016; Kaplan et. al., 2019).

When delving into what factors led to students' lack of motivation, some research findings on L2 motivation targeting Chinese freshman (Cao, 2017; Xu, 2018) pointed to the students' negative perceptions of classroom practices, among which the teachers' teaching method and teaching style are the most to blame. Actually, although many students have passed their English college entrance exam with high scores, they are found to have developed so-called "mute English", that is, a good mastery of language rules and vocabulary, but are weak in listening comprehension and speaking due to limited experience of communication (Xu and Xu, 2003; Cao, 2017). This can at least be partially attributed to the traditional means of language teaching. Therefore, this study proposed to construct a motivation-sensitive teaching model that incorporate a multitude of motivational variables in language teaching to deal with the rich, multi-construct, contextualized motivational system. In this model, the teaching contextual factors, that is, teaching method (production-oriented approach, POA), teaching organization (collaborative learning) and teaching means (multimodal teaching) cooperate and interact with motivational strategies, all impact learners' L2 learning motivation and language development.

Objectives

Based on the above context, this study aims to address two questions: 1) Can the dynamic motivation English teaching model improve the learners' English proficiency in terms of written test and oral test? 2) Which skill among the four skills of speaking, reading, writing and translation in the written test demonstrated the most effectiven from the dynamic motivation English teaching model?

Methodology

1. Participants

The participants of this study were 84 first- year college students from Anhui Polytechnic University, Anhui, China. There were 42 learners in both the experimental group and the control group from two classes of Logistic, Advertising and Human Resources in the academic year 2020-2021. Based on the pre-test results, there was no significant difference in English proficiency between the two groups. The experimental group was taught by the researcher using the dynamic motivation English teaching model for 14 weeks. The control group was taught by a colleague lecturer with the traditional method. Both two teachers have more than 10 years of teaching experience, and there is no obvious difference in teaching experience and professional dedication.

2. Instructional design

Usually, the English teaching in China class is exam oriented. For most college freshmen, passing CET4 has become the single aim of learning English. Therefore, the English classroom focuses on training students to pass CET4 exam. With the scoring weight of the test based on the government criteria (writing15%, listening 35%, reading 35%, and translation 15%), the English class of 90 minutes normally starts with listening skill from the textbooks of about 20 minutes. The rest of 60 minutes devotes on reading comprehension practice. The class then, ends up with the practice of translation. Students also would place high value on and a lot of effort in vocabulary memorizing and reading exercises.

The dynamic motivation English teaching model experiment lasted 12 weeks, with 4 hours per week and totally 48 hours. The first 2 weeks were guidance courses and preparatory stage of the teaching model, involving the explanation of POA, such as the reasoning of "learning cantered", "the integration of learning using" and "whole education", as well as how it was implemented in the three phases, namely, " output driven", "input enabling" and "selective learning" (Wen, 2015). Firstly, students were grouped in the unit of dormitory of 4- 6 students, each member in a group was designated a particular role to play, including: a leader, a recorder, a reporter, a checker, or an observer. Secondly, students were encouraged to identify their immediate goals and actions plans in order to operationalize their ideal L2 self. Lastly, students were asked to monitor their plan fulfilment in the whole semester, assess their progress on the action plans and revise action plans regularly to help students focus on their action plan.

The techniques used for collaborative learning involve: 1) Think- pair- share; 2) adapted jigsaw reading; 3) round-robin story make-up; and 4) Student Team-Achievement Divisions. In each unit especially in the enabling phase, students were provided with

various modal resources (such as language, vision, hearing, gesture, spatial mode and PPT, etc.), as well as a variety of media means (such as blackboard, computer, QQ group, Superstar Online Learning software, etc.), to encourage students to choose the materials and methods that suit their needs to help them to accomplish the output tasks. In addition to the three essential teaching elements, 32 motivational strategies from Dörnyei's motivational teaching practice (2001) run through the beginning and the end of the whole teaching process according to the characteristics of the students at the research setting and the teaching goals. The following is a glimpse of how the integration of the three teaching components and motivational strategies interplay with each other in each phase as the teaching activity progresses.

Table 1 The operationalization of the dynamic motivational teaching model

Phase	Contents	Multimodality	Collaborative learning	Motivational Strategies
Motivating	Teachers present the communicative scenes	mini lecture online	/	Make the teaching materials and the unit task relevant to the students by relating the subject matter to the everyday experiences and backgrounds of the learners.
	Students try producing output tasks	written work/ presentation/role play/ interview recorded video	Group learning and checking together	Creating realistic learner beliefs
	Teachers announce teaching aims and output task	PPT	Individual accountability	Increasing the learners' goal-orientedness
	Teacher divides the general output task into several	PPT text/video	Individual accountability	Increase the learners' expectancy of success in

Phase	Contents	Multimodality	Collaborative learning	Motivational Strategies
Enabling	small ones, and provide learning materials and guidance accordingly	/listening materials		particular tasks by providing sufficient preparation and offering assistance
	Students select the content, language and structure to learn which are closely relevant to the output to be produced from the materials given by the teacher	text/video /listening materials	Think-pair-share/Jigsaw reading (text understanding/ vocabulary/writing skill)/ Round robin story make-up	Making learning stimulating and enjoyable Increase the students' motivation by actively promoting learner autonomy.
	Students produce output task	written work/ presentation/role play/ interview recorded video	After finishing their assignment independently, students submitted them in group	Increase students' goal-orientedness by drawing students' attention from time to time to unit goals.
Assessing	The teacher and students learn the assessment criteria together	PPT	Teacher-and students collaborate together	Make sure that they know exactly that success in the task involves.
	Students submit their product to the teacher	Online written work/ presentation/role play/ interview recorded video	After finishing their assignment independently, students submitted them in group	Take into account team products and not just individual products in your assessments.
	The teacher and students evaluate	PPT	Students first evaluate individually and	Providing motivational feedback.

Phase	Contents	Multimodality	Collaborative learning	Motivational Strategies
	students' product collaboratively		then make a group discussion	Include problem-solving activities that lead to the successful completion of whole-group tasks or involve small-group tasks.

3. Data collection and analysis

The research instruments used in this experiment were pre- and post- oral and written tests. The written test, College English Test Band 4 (CET4), is a national English test conducted by Chinese Ministry of Education aiming to measure the English competence of Chinese college students. The test consists of the following four parts: writing (15%), listening comprehension (35%), reading comprehension (35%), and translation (15%). To measure participants' competence in the use of spoken English, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) was adopted to test the students' oral proficiency. The test uses a nine-band scale to clearly identify levels of proficiency, from non-user (band score 1) through to expert (band score 9). There are three parts to the test: interview, individual long turn and two-way discussion, and each part fulfils a specific function in terms of interaction pattern, task input and test takers output respectively. The grading of the communicative competence is based upon four criteria: (1) fluency and coherence; (2) lexical Resource; (3) grammatical range and accuracy (4) pronunciation. Both written and oral tests were administered at the beginning and toward the end of the semester. The scoring was responsible by the author and the teacher of the control group. Statistical software SPSS was also utilized to analyze scores from the repeated oral tests and written tests to compare the inter- and intra-group differences.

The students' self-report includes their overall feeling over this dynamic motivational teaching model, their gains, difficulties and suggestions, which can be used to hear different voice from the participants about the effects of the teaching model and prepare for future improvement.

Results

In this section, the results of the oral test, written test as well as each of the four items in written test (writing, listening, reading and translation) were reported to examine

the effects of the motivational teaching model on the EFL learners' language proficiency gains.

1. Comparison of the oral test scores of the two groups

As shown in Table 2, both groups obtained almost the same score on the pre-oral test of the IETTS test with the mean score of the control group 3.61, and 3.55 for the experimental group. Therefore, there was no significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test. However, after one semester's motivational teaching treatment, the score of the oral test in the experimental group (M=4.64) was much higher than that in the control group (M=3.80). As displayed in Table 2, a significant difference of the two group in their post-test was obtained since the P value was as low as .00, indicating that the students in the experimental group significantly made greater progress in their oral English than the students in the control group.

Table2 Inter-Group Statistics of Pre- and Post-Test Oral Task
(N of each group=42)

Item	Time	Group	Mean	SD	T-value	P-value
Oral test	Pre	Experimental	3.55	1.12	-.278	.781
		Control	3.61	0.82		
	Post	Experimental	4.64	0.88	4.879	.000
		Control	3.79	0.69		

2. Comparison of the written test scores of the two groups

After the comparison of the oral test, let's turn to the results of the inter-group analysis of written test. From Table 3, we can see that with the p-value of .865, there was not significant difference between the two groups in their pre-test, likewise, no significant difference was found in the post-test either, although the mean score of the CET written test of the experimental group was 2.96 point higher than that of the control group, that is to say, both the experimental group and the control group have made improvement after one semester's English learning.

Table 3 Inter-Group Statistics of Pre- and Post-Test Written Task
(N of each group=42)

Item	Time	Group	Mean	SD	T-value	P-value
Written test	Pre	Experimental	47.32	10.82	-.171	.865
		Control	47.75	12.13		
	Post	Experimental	55.33	11.45	1.194	.236
		Control	52.37	11.31		

3. Comparison of the written test scores of the four skills

In order to make a better understanding, the four items - writing, listening, reading and translation in the written test were also investigated for further analysis. The first analysis involved the listening part. According to Table 4, although the control group got slightly higher score than the experimental group with the mean difference of 0.28 in the pre-test, the experimental group scored 1.74 points higher than the control group in the post-test. But both of the two differences were not significant (P=0.713 in the pre-test and P=0.137 in the post-test). For the reading part, both the pre- and post-test saw that the control group scored slightly higher than the experimental group, but the difference was not significant either (P=0.038 in the pre-test and P=0.364 in the post test). That is to say, both the experimental group and the control group have made improvement in listening, reading, but there is no significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test and the post-test. In other words, the experimental group achieved as well as the control group in the two language skills. However, things were quite different in composition and translation. The experimental group outperformed the control group significantly in the post-test. The mean score of the post translation task in the experimental group was 9.91, while that of the control group was 8.69, the mean difference of the 1.22 was statistically significant (P=0.005<0.05). The same situation can be seen in the composition part, but with even more noticeable significant difference in the post-test between the two groups as the p-value was as low as 0.00.

Table 4 The inter-group comparison between the experimental group and control Group (N of each group=42)

Skills	Subjects	Pretest				Posttest			
		Mean	SD	T-value	P-value	Mean	SD	T-value	P-value
Listening	Experimental	15.67	4.59	-.369	.713	17.79	5.70	1.502	.137
	Control	15.95	5.51			16.05	4.87		
Reading	Experimental	13.87	5.64	-2.148	.038	16.12	4.54	-.912	.364
	Control	14.35	6.17			17.09	5.20		
Translation	Experimental	7.98	3.65	-2.737	.009	9.91	3.86	2.901	.005
	Control	7.67	2.82			8.69	4.09		
Composition	Experimental	9.71	2.20	-6.511	.000	11.36	1.68	3.892	.000
	Control	9.83	1.96			9.79	2.006		

To sum up, the results of the inter- group comparison demonstrated that the experimental group achieved as well as the control group in the written test, But was significantly better than the control group in the oral test. Both groups demonstrated nearly the same ability in receptive skills (reading, listening), but the experimental group was far superior to the control group in the productive skills (speaking, translation, composition) after one semester motivational teaching treatment. In other words, the students in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group, particularly at productive skills, revealing positive effects of the dynamic motivation English teaching model.

Conclusion and discussion

The results showed that the control group did not outdo the experimental group in the written test, and the experimental group achieved as well as the control group did in CET4. Our research hypothesis is that POA and collaborative learning value output skills and communication, and that students had to spend additional time completing oral output tasks through peer interaction that may negatively impact their level 4 test scores.

There was no significant difference in the posterior English scores between the two groups. However, the learners in the experimental group demonstrated a stronger ability on the language skills of speaking, writing and translation, indicating that the dynamic motivational teaching model improved the students' productive skills. The reasons to account for such phenomenon are as follows.

First, the experimental group was endowed with more opportunities to use the target language. Under POA, students were provided with more opportunities to use the target language by carrying out various communicative tasks in terms of both written and oral English. The findings were in line with Zhang's study (2017) that POA brought positive effects on learners' productive skills.

In a cooperative learning context, the amount of students' target language practice was further maximized by interactive activities that involved pair work and group work, which engaged all the students in speaking. The language input, output, correction and meaningful communication administered during the group collaborative process can help learners deepen the processing of language knowledge, so as to improve their language ability and promote their cognitive development (Zhang, Zhou & Yu, 2021). Almost in each session of class, students were asked to do think-pair-share. The frequent interactive practice through pair or group work like jig-saw reading, round-robin story make-up and other oral productive activities might be an important factor contributing to the students' acquisition of oral communicative competence. This was also validated in students' self-report where many students mentioned that under POA and cooperative learning, the biggest improvement they found themselves made was oral English. Furthermore, cooperative learning also contributed to students' improvement of writing ability. Ideas and content for writing arouse from conducting teacher-student, and student-student interaction, which also prompted learners to reflect on language, discuss the language they are using, and collaborate in the solution of the linguistic problems they encounter (Dat, 2014).

The second reason for the experimental group's significant gains in the productive language may be due to their rich and sufficient exposure to authentic enabling materials in the forms of text, pictures video and audio against the single form of text in the course book and lots of language exercises as the input. Printed, visual and audial, all these authentic materials not only enabled learners to interact with the language of native speakers, including its grammatical features, discourse structures, sociolinguistic features, and cultural referents (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1994; Kang, 2016), but also enhanced their awareness of appropriate and effective use of the target language. Many students reported that just because they read and listened much more than before, so, they

could speak more fluently and write an English essay much longer and more easily. They could also put a lot more new and idiomatic words in their oral communication as well as well-structured and beautifully complex sentences into their writings.

The third possible reason why the experimental group could make such significant progress in productive competence was due to the affective factor, such as increased awareness, more confidence and less anxiety. This was true especially in terms of students' oral competence. Because POA underscores the use of a language to do things (Wen, 2015), instead of just a course to pass the examination.

In a supportive and less threatening learning context provided by this motivational teaching model, students had more confidence and less anxiety in actively participating in the classroom oral activities and conduct peer interaction. They were more willing to volunteer to answer questions and express their ideas in and outside of the classroom, which made them access to ample opportunities to use their language skills and led to more improvement and achievement. Research finding shows that learners who perceive themselves as successful and capable learners can learn more and do better in school (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Jetton, 1994; Yuan 2008). Likewise, Clément (1980) also reported that self-confidence improves achievement (Clément, 1980; Wang, 2012). The contribution of cooperative learning and motivation strategies in boosting students' confidence could find support from students' self-report, "I used to be very shy and did not dare to speak in public, but with my group members' help and encouragement, I have become more and more outgoing and I never feel ashamed when I speak wrongly", " I don't feel embarrassed any longer when I am making mistakes in speaking English because we were convinced by our teacher that we can always make progress by making mistakes".

From the three reasons above, it can be understood that students in the experimental group developed stronger speaking, writing and translation abilities than those in the control group. The dynamic motivational teaching model promoted the development of the productive skills of the experimental group.

According to Table 4, although no significant difference could be found in listening between the two groups, the control group got slightly higher score than the experimental group with the mean difference of 0.29 in the pre-test. But the experimental group scored 1.74 points higher than the control group in the post-test. Both differences were not significant (P=0.713 in the pre-test and P=0.137 in the post-test). The intra-group comparison demonstrated that the experimental group made significant improvement in listening, while no such gains could be seen in the control group. This was not difficult to explain. Successful language development occurs when

students are presented with material in a meaningful context with clear production purpose in mind (Yuan, 2008). In the present teaching experiment, the learners under the motivational teaching model were exposed to a large amount of listening materials from which they could obtain the relevant ideas or useful language expressions. Besides, the experimental group were required to take notes while they were listening to the talk show or other video clips in class. After listening, they were asked to do the information-gap activity or make comments on what they had heard. In contrast, in the control group, without the production task as an orientation, there will be no impetus for the teacher to search for diverse input materials as a complement to enlarge student' language knowledge, and the listening practice was always limited to the CD-ROM of the textbook followed by the questions or multiple-choice based on what had been heard.

The same explanation can also be applied to the findings of listening comprehension. Because the two groups of learners committed themselves to the listening and reading skill with similar efforts, that is why no significant difference could be found in terms of listening and reading between the two groups in the post-test. Another possible reason for such finding was that under POA and cooperative learning, a great deal of attention was paid to the learners' productive skills and peer interaction, leaving little focus on the specific receptive skills training, and even less on the exam-orientation training. Furthermore, because the experimental teaching lasted for only one semester, the treatment effects may not be significantly obvious immediately in every language skill. According to the finding that "The higher the motivation, the more proficient they would become in the target language" (Liang, 2002; Meng, 2010; Genana, & Jin, 2016), in other words, more gains of L2 learning motivation may finally lead to more gains of L2 proficiency progress, a sharper competitive edge in the listening and reading for the experimental group may emerge in the longer term.

In sum, the experimental group had a sharp edge in the productive skill, and in the meantime, still maintained similar achievement in receptive skills as the control group. With such results, the motivational teaching model deserves more attention to increase students' overall language proficiency.

Suggestions

This study was to compare the results of two teaching models conducted with two university classes in China. While one class was treated with the dynamic motivational teaching model, the other was taught with the traditional teaching model. The results showed that the receptive skills (reading, listening) of the experimental group was comparable to those of the control group, but the experimental group was far superior

to the former in the productive skills (speaking, translation, composition) after one' semester motivational teaching treatment.

Limited to class hours, the number of subjects and other factors, this study has two limitations: 1) the intervention period of the dynamic motivational teaching model was quite short, so the question of the long effect of the model intervention cannot be answered , especially given more time whether the students in the experimental group could also outperform the control group in listening and reading, or the large amount of language output will play a counterproductive effect on their receptive skills; 2) the learners in the study were grouped together through the course selection system, which means that the learners would not study under the same teachers, so the delayed effect of the dynamic motivational teaching model cannot be answered. Follow-up studies can be improved in these two areas. In order to get to the root of learners' motivation and its effects, the sources of language motivation should be in-depth investigated. In addition, the number of participants should be increased for greater generalization.

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