

# On How to Cultivate English Interest in Primary School

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**Abstract**—At present, the following problems generally exist in primary school teaching: the obsolescence teaching mode; the depressing classroom atmosphere; the little oral practice and the disappearing interest of English. In addition to these problems, teaching methods, pupils' life environment, pressure from parents and many other elements resulting in many pupils' learning interest are decreasing in the beginning and bring about a phenomenon that many pupils in some degree are weary of learning. It makes our teaching work difficult, what is more, it will influence pupils' English learning at different step of junior, senior and college. So it is very important that cultivating pupil's learning interest at the stage of primary school. The focus of this paper is to use various teaching methods to stimulate and cultivate their interest in learning English according to pupil's psychological characteristics and development needs.

**Index Terms**—cultivate, English interest, primary school

## I. INTRODUCTION

Because of engaging in tutoring and training courses, and also contacting many high school pupils during leading the internship, there is one common thing in their learning process that is the lack of interest in learning English. The majority of pupils are like a pool of stagnant water, who are blindly and passively learning English without emotion. As Arends (1998) said that the most ferocious and terrible enemy in teaching is that the pupils are not interested in your lessons. Therefore, interest is very important in class teaching.

Why does this thesis choose this primary stage of primary school to develop interest in English rather than junior high school? Because the primary school English teaching is the foundation of basic education, the period of English education enlightenment and the critical stage of cultivating and fostering talent. Therefore, as a teacher it is very important to explore the ways to stimulate their interest in learning English. Some training methods are shown in the thesis, if they are put into practice, the quality of teaching will be improved.

## II. LEARNING INTEREST

A great man once said that I think, for everything, only interest is the best teacher, it is far more than the sense of responsibility." An author described that learning must also meet your interest, so we can get benefit. In author's view, interest is a strong learning motivation, and also is the starting point for success. So, what is interest? Why is it so important?

### A. *The Concept of Learning Interest*

What is interest? It refers that a person's positive learning tendencies and emotional state. Interest can become the reason of learning for it can promote learning (Krapp, 1992). Interest is also produced in the learning activities and can become the result of learning for it can produce new interest and improve original interest. So, learning interest is the cause of the study, and also the result of learning.

At the same time, many domestic and foreign scholars have also studied the definitions of learning interest. A domestic scholar, thinks that learning interest is the starting point of learning enthusiasm and initiative (Carrole, 1992). It can stimulate pupils to know world, gain scientific and cultural knowledge and explore the internal law of things with pleasant emotion color. An author thinks that learning interest is a tendency of pupils desire to learn knowledge (Qiu, 2014). The tendency contacts with certain feelings and reflect the intrinsic motivation in learning, which accompanies with epistemic motivation, rational emotion and positive learning attitude. In addition, a scholar defines interest as a unique variable motivation (Ye, 2018). She thinks that interest is a psychological state between people and attractive things, and it accompanies with the emergence of concentration and positive feelings.

To sum up, learning interest is a kind of psychological state that people desire to learn knowledge and strive to know world. It has the characteristics of the initiative and positive.

### B. *The Importance of Learning Interest*

Interest plays a huge role from the definition of learning interest. Learning interest can make pupils focus their attention and produce good psychological state of tension. Pupils can produce positive impact in the process of learning knowledge. If not interested in learning, you won't pay attention to learning. Only pupils are interested in something, they are willing to actively use their brains and seriously thinking. They try to acquire more knowledge in the quickest, most effective method. As Confucius said who likes is better than one knows, who enjoys is better than who likes.

Interest plays a promoting role in the development of intelligence. It's the key to develop intelligence. There is an opinion that all intellectual work relies on interest. An investigation is the impact of interest on the success or failure of learning. The survey shows the impact of interest on success occupies 25%, intelligence accounts for 15%. However, the impact of lack interest on failure occupies 35%, intelligence is equal to zero.

### *C. The Classification and Structure of Learning Interest*

From point of the structural features of interest, interest can be divided into individual interest and situational interest. At present, this theory has been generally accepted by domestic and western psychologist. In the field of education, researchers mostly make a deeper analysis from the classification of situational interest and individual interest.

Individual interest refers to a psychological tendency that it relatively and fixedly points to a certain object, activity, or a particular field of knowledge. It mainly based on the preexisting individual knowledge, individual experience and emotion. Another important feature of individual interest is internal. Individual is interest in something due to the internal demand of subject, not external causes. Pupils are interest in English, not because they are asked to learn by their parents, but because they like the language and are willing to learn it well. Later, the researchers further divide the individual interest into potential and realistic individual interest, and potential interest is associated with emotion and value. And they put forward the situational interest based on the text, task and knowledge.

Situational interest is defined as an emotional state aroused by conditional stimulus. It is often generated by certain conditions and concrete objects in the environment. Situational interest has been found to have a significant influence on pupils' motivation in learning. It primarily influences learning by paying stronger attention to the learning material. Many primary teachers often use situational teaching method, because the content of primary textbooks is very easy, colloquial and close to life. It can make classroom atmosphere active and stimulate their learning interest. Situational interest is associated with variable elements that teachers may have controlled over such as task design and teaching methods. It may have a stronger potential than individual interest for teacher to use in motivating pupils to learn. The study shows that the situational interest includes two stages: the interest is aroused in the first stage and is sequentially kept in the second stage. Researchers think that the second stage will have a closer contact with the whole situational interest rather than the first stage.

Another scholar, divided the interest into two categories: emotional interest and cognitive interest. Among them, emotional interest is readers' emotional reaction caused by information and cognitive interest is readers' acquiring knowledge from materials.

## III. THE RESEARCH OF PUPIL'S INTEREST IN LEARNING ENGLISH

According to survey and teachers' teaching experience, from two aspects the pupil' learning interest can be analyzed. One is the present situation of pupil's learning English, the other is the factors of leading to this present situation that pupils' enthusiasm cools down as time goes on.

### *A. The Present Situation of Pupil's Interest in Learning English*

It is found that the development of primary pupils' learning interest can be divided into three stages through observing.

Firstly, pupils are eager to learn English. English learning as a foreign language is a fresh thing for pupils. They have known some English daily greetings and a few words when they are very young, such as "Hello""Goodbye""Apple" and so on. Their special curiosity makes them look forward to learning English. So, pupils are very interested in learning English.

Secondly, English is very interesting at beginning of learning. Pupils are attracted by vivid and interesting English class when they are involved in the world of English learning. Several groups of words can meet pupils' curiosity, such as animals, fruits, sports and so on. Teachers create situation in teaching according to characteristics of pupils' age and psychology. They let pupils speak and enjoy English by using the teaching way of TPR. For example, pupils can sing songs, guess words and play games in the class. At that time, they will happily say they like having English class after class.

It is clear that most of pupils are interested in English learning. But, can it last for a long time? Of course, it is not true. Most of pupils' interest can only stay in the surface for it can't stand the test of time and difficult setbacks.

Thirdly, the enthusiasm decreases with time and the difficulty of knowledge. After more than several years of learning, enthusiasm gradually cools down. If researchers understand pupils carefully, it's not difficult to find out the reasons why their interest gradually cools down. They think learning English is no usage. The grammar knowledge is too boring, trivial and difficult. They waste time to learn English, but the result is not good, so they give up learning English at last.

### *B. The Influencing Factors of Pupil's Interest in Learning English*

There are other three major influencing factors of pupil's interest in learning English. They are school, family, and pupils' personal qualities.

The effect comes from school, such as teaching tools: computer multimedia, projector and so on. Primary school

pupils are in a lively and active age and it is difficult for them to focus their high attention on the whole class. Teachers can attract pupils' attention and enhance their interest in learning by providing pupils with a lot of teaching tools and competitive activities. According to domestic survey and teaching experience, teachers know that the use of multiple teaching tools can bring about good teaching results. In this way, pupils learn English happily and understand knowledge quickly. Next is teaching methods. In this part of the research mainly focus on all kinds of teaching activities, the influence of game activities and competitive activities on the learning interest has been confirmed by many researchers. Interactive English teaching means that pupils widely participate in cooperation in the classroom teaching environment through interacting among teachers, pupils, language materials and other factors. It is a process of learning English by communicating with English and studying effectively. Practice has proved that the interactive class activities can improve and stimulate interest in learning English for primary school pupils. Then, it's the attitude of teachers. The result of the survey shows that the teachers' encouragement and praise, the attention for pupils and the more exercise opportunities can improve their interest in learning. Teachers' behaviors of learning help have significant positive influence on pupils' interest in learning. On the contrary teacher' negative emotional behaviors will have a significant negative impact on the learning interest and learning efficacy of pupils. Finally, learning materials and learning tasks also have a great influence on learning interest. Too hard learning tasks and materials will dampen pupils' learning enthusiasm. In addition to those, the domestic survey finds that the too much difficult listening tasks and that pupils' study concept, teachers' teaching ability and the attention to grammar and reading also have a great influence on interest.

The effect comes from family. The effect of family mainly includes the attitude of the parents towards English learning, the interest of parents towards native language and a second language, the interaction and direct communication between parents and children and the support degree of parents for language education. It is known that a good family learning atmosphere, parents' education ideas and the other family education ways are closely related to children's extensive, stable and positive qualities of interest. If parents don't take English seriously and they think learning English is useless, which will make children to look down on English inevitably.

The effect comes from pupils. The learning interest of the pupils is so different due to the differences of age, gender and prior knowledge. Grade 3 in primary school is a good period to develop learning interest in terms of age. And the learning interest of grade 6 is the highest. But the high school pupils' interest is decreasing with increasing of grade. The girl pupils have a higher English learning interest and stronger language sense than the boy pupils in terms of gender. A scholar links the interest with motivation and puts forward an idea that interest is a positive reaction. It bases on pupils' background knowledge and produces learning motivation. If pupils are very interested in English learning, they will have a higher motivation and like studying.

#### IV. THE METHODS OF CULTIVATING PUPIL'S INTEREST IN LEARNING ENGLISH

After analyzing the influence factors of pupils' learning interest, some good ways can be found to cultivate their learning interest. Pupils' interest in learning English will be developed from five aspects.

##### A. *Mobilizing Classroom Atmosphere and Learning Enthusiasm*

Pupils are still at the age of curious, naughty and active. So, in class teachers should try to use liting, humorous, incentive and suspense language, organize teaching with facial expressions and gestures and create an open, comfortable teaching environment for pupils. The comfortable classroom atmosphere can let pupils learn English with relaxed and happy mood, and they dare to speak English, actively thinking and constantly produce the interest of learning English and display their ability. The new textbooks have a lot of life content, which pupils are familiar with, so teachers should properly change the classroom into their activity places and display their individuality freely. It can stimulate their learning interest in this way. As we all know, a good beginning is half of success.

The play is the nature of children, the teachers should make full use of textbook before class and carefully design a series of informative, interesting and educational teaching games including listening, speaking, reading and writing. For examples, guessing riddles, reading rhymes, spelling game and singing English songs. Let them take an interest in English, and fall in love with English. The design of games must be interesting, scientific and educational, thus pupils can use their brains to think some questions for themselves in the process of games. When teacher teaches the Unit One in book of Grade Five in a class , this unit requires pupils to describe a person's appearance by using the sentence "What's ...like". At that time, teacher does a demonstration firstly. For example, this is a boy. He is tall. He has a short hair. He is funny. He wears a blue T-shirt. Who is he? He is..... Let the pupils learn how to describe a person's appearance through the game. When pupils heard playing the game, the classroom atmosphere suddenly is perked up and pupils' attention immediately focused, so the pupils are eager to join in it. The atmosphere is brisk and teaching achieves very good effect.

##### B. *Using Visual, Vivid Teaching Methods*

In order to make the class not boring, teachers can make use of visual and vivid teaching tools to teach knowledge in class, such as pictures, stick figures, slides, material objects, charts, videos and so on. The visual aids can help pupils understand and master necessary emotional experience effectively. In that the visual teaching aids have vivid

characteristics, they can fix pupils' attention and improve pupils' learning interest.

When it comes to English grammar, teachers always use boring, trivial and complicated way to describe grammar. In order to gain good teaching effect, teachers can use visual, vivid and flexible way to teach grammar knowledge. For example, the First Unit part two of Grade Six is "How Tall Are You?". The difficult content is adjective comparative. When teacher teach adjective comparative "bigger, taller, smaller, heavier, longer, shorter, fatter and so on", teacher brings two oranges, two bananas, two apples into the class. Firstly, teacher makes several dialogues with pupils and then explains it in Chinese like this:

T: "What are these in my hands?"

Ss: "They are apples."

T: "This is the first apple, and another one is the second apple. Which one is bigger?"

Ss: "The first apple is bigger."

T: "And the second apple is smaller? "

Ss: "The second apple is smaller."

T: "Good. So the first apple is bigger than the second apple or the second apple is smaller than the first apple."

When teacher makes several dialogues with pupils, teacher also writes the important sentences and the words of adjective comparative on the blackboard and explained them. If pupils correctly used the adjective comparative sentence pattern, teacher would reward them apples.

In this way, it can help pupils understand and use the adjective comparative. The usage of visual teaching aids can attract pupils' attention and stimulate their learning interest.

### C. Making Flexible Use of Textbook and Creating Situational Teaching

The textbooks of primary school are generally brief and their forms are very single. This requires teachers to put language materials into different situations where teachers can listen, see and touch when teachers prepare lessons. So, pupils not only can learn a few words and some short dialogues, but also learn some vivid language materials that can be used in many situations. As English teachers, they should specialize in teaching materials carefully and be very familiar with contents that have learned and to learn. It is necessary to increase some teaching contents appropriately. When teaching new lessons, teachers firstly can review knowledge that have learned last time and then pave the way for a new lesson by introducing some interesting topics. Thus, pupils' knowledge and enthusiasm will increase as time goes on just like a snowball.

Dialogue is coherent speech in certain situations. Dialogue is meaningless without situation. Teachers can present dialogue content by creating a situation before teaching new knowledge. This way is real and vivid. It has a great help for pupils to understand and master new dialogue. The biggest characteristics of new English textbooks are colloquial and lifestyle. Teaching materials include a large number of situational conversations, such as shopping, asking the way, making a phone and so on. The content is close to life and the length of article is short. Pupils can apply these situational conversations to life directly.

For example, if teacher teaches the lesson of "How Much Is It?", teacher will decorate the classroom into a shop. The desk is seen as a counter. Teacher puts all kinds of goods and prices them. Teacher and pupils play customers and salesperson respectively. In that way, teacher can design a real shopping situation by using visual teaching aids, actions, gestures and expressions. The new content is presented in real situations, thus pupils can understand it quickly. Therefore, pupils can learn English unconsciously, without pressure and burden.

### D. Establishing Pupil's Confidence in Learning

The English teaching activities should be pupil-centered and teacher-supplemented, teachers should tap their potential and cultivate pupils' interest in English fully. It is pupils themselves who learn and are given space to develop learning ability. Teachers should guide pupils to develop their learning potential, cultivate pupils' creativity and let them really enjoy the joy of learning success, instead of constantly having lessons and teaching knowledge in class. That way will only be counterproductive.

When pupils make mistakes, pupils should encourage them more rather than criticize. When pupils answer the question correctly, pupils should give great praise to them and that will cause pupils' learning confidence. As we all know, if pupils trust their master, they would follow his way. So teachers don't mean to praise and encourage pupils, especially for some pupils of poor study ability. Pupils should more favor their good aspects, timely find their shining points, increase their confidence and enhance their power.

### E. Carrying out Various Kinds of English Extracurricular Activities

Pupils can learn English in classroom and also through all kinds of extracurricular activities. Teachers can organize different forms of extracurricular activities according to the pupils' age, personality, skills and interest. These activities provide pupils with good study environment, add fun for pupils, cultivate the pupils' spirit of innovation and improve their practical ability.

The common forms of activities are as follows:

In the first place, it is necessary to hold English corner. English corner is very popular in the society. Because it can improve people's and English lovers can join in the English corner. They can talk interesting topics or study problems.

Teachers should encourage pupils to speak, even if they make mistakes, it doesn't matter. The most important is that they dare to speak English.

In the second place, it is regular to hold English contests. Pupil's competitive spirit is very strong. They always want to be stronger than others and desire to show off. The content of English contests can be colorful, such as writing, recitation, singing, guessing game and so on. Pupils should hold these activities. Teachers and pupils constitute panel of judgment. The winner will be given a big prize, but the contests must be fair.

In the third place, pupils can often play English dramas. It is useful to play children's dramas, the classic fairy tale fable story and dramas in textbook. Pupils can use their facial expressions and body language to play dramas. It benefits pupils a lot.

In addition to the above activities, there are other kinds of extracurricular activities. It is the necessary supplement for class to organize rich and colorful extracurricular activities, so it's good for teachers to carry out activities regularly.

## V. CONCLUSION

Language learning is a long-term process and pupils need accumulate knowledge over a long period. This is a long war. How to defeat the war? I think learning interest is a key to defeat the war. When children learn English at young age, they are excited, curious and willing to learn English. But, their enthusiasm will gradually cool down as time goes on. How to maintain the pupils' interest in learning is an important and difficult task for teachers. A good English teacher has not only rich English knowledge, but also unique, diverse, innovative teaching methods. Let pupils will to learn, love to learn and learn well by those ways. Maybe all kinds of difficulties in the teaching process will be met, but pupils can't give up this task and any one of pupils. Except teachers, school and parents also play an important role in this long war. Schools and parents should give great support for the teaching work. Schools should equip with a full range of teaching facilities and create a good teaching environment. Parents should encourage children and supervise their study, and create a good family learning environment. Only teacher, school and family make cooperation each other, children will not be tired in the process of learning English.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is funded by 11531 project of Nanchang Normal University

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