

# Applying Research Teaching Mode to Relieving Non-English Majors' Learning Burnout

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## **Abstract**

*It is found that research teaching mode is beneficial to developing learners' motivation in English learning process. This paper did a study: apply this mode to English classroom in order to test its function in relieving non-English majors' English learning burnout. The results show that to some degree research teaching mode did make it. With the new teaching mode, learners got lower scores than those with the traditional teaching mode in dejection, improper behaviors and reduced personal accomplishment. Besides, all the differences are significant. However, in order to get a better result, teachers should give students more instructions.*

**Key Words:** research teaching mode; non-English majors; learning burnout

## **1. Introduction**

Learning burnout is a kind of negative emotion, which would do bad effects on learners. So it is really necessary to relieve it. Some researchers found that nowadays many college students have formed learning burnout, especially to non-English majors, English learning burnout has existed among many of them (Zhang, 2013a). The reasons leading to this phenomenon can be divided to two parts: first, the teaching environment, such as, the teaching content is not attractive; the teaching methods are out of date, etc. second, learners. Such as: they do not have the right attitude to English study, the learning way is not appropriate, etc. (Zhang, 2013b). Many educators give some good suggestions as to how to overcome it. In 2005 Chinese Ministry of Education pointed that: higher education should promote research teaching mode to advance college students' creativity. The cultivation of creativity may be beneficial to the relieving of learning burnout. So an experiment was carried out among non-English majors to testify the effectiveness of research teaching mode in overcoming English learning burnout.

## **2. Literature Review**

Some detailed literature about research teaching mode would be introduced.

### **Definition of Research Teaching Mode**

Research teaching mode is opposite to the traditional teaching mode, which focuses on the unilateral delivery of knowledge. It combines learning and research; what's more, on the basis of learners' schema and the teaching content, it aims to lead learners to creatively apply their knowledge and ability to discovering questions, analyzing questions, and then solving questions; during this process students' ability would be improved, their knowledge would be enhanced, and their thinking ability would also be advanced (Sun, 2001). As a new teaching mode, research teaching mode gives priority to the combination of teaching, learning and researching, changed the phenomenon that teachers teach the content, and learners just copy down what the teacher said. It converts the focus from delivering knowledge to teaching students how to learn well. This teaching mode emphasizes the elaborating of learners' subjective initiative, and cultivating of learners' autonomous learning ability. Teaching should be process of mutual promotion.

### **Theoretical Basis of Research Teaching Mode**

Research teaching mode originated from 1960s, based on humanistic psychology and Bruner's cognitive learning theory.

### **Humanistic Psychology**

Rogers, the representative of humanistic psychology, pointed that in education, we should hold the principle of "respecting each other, understanding each other, and trusting each other". He emphasized that learners should be the subject of learning, teachers should focus on the teaching of learning way, and what's more, meaningful learning should be advocated, non-intelligent factors, such as emotion, should be motivated. In teaching process, teachers should cultivate learners' creativity, build a fair relationship between teachers and students, and create the best teaching atmosphere (Ying, 2001). On the premise of this theory, teachers should realize that learners are the subject of any learning process, fully respect learners'

respective characteristics, and then come up with some moderate teaching programs which could not be too easy or difficult for them. With such programs learners' learning interest would be fully enhanced. When learners are given enough time and chance to perform themselves, their ability could be promoted to the best. Therefore, it is a good try to introduce research teaching mode in college English teaching.

### **Constructivism**

Constructivists emphasize that learners are the subject of cognitive activities. They are the active builders of knowledge instead of the passive acceptors. Learning process should not be such a process: teachers deliver knowledge to students and students accept it passively. Instead, it should be such a process in which learners, on the basis of their prior knowledge, actively make understanding of what teachers tell them to build their knowledge by contacting the outside world (Wang, 2011). Constructivism provides theoretical basis for learners' autonomous study and students-centered theory. Based on these two theories, teaching process must attach much importance to the fact that learners are the center of learning process, so teachers should make students discover, and explore by themselves. Students should be given the opportunity to manage their study on their own. Teachers' role in the class should be converted from the leader to guilders, helpers. Thus, research teaching mode coincides with this theory.

## **3. A Study of Applying Research Teaching Mode to College English Class**

### **Participants**

This study was carried out in some university in Sichuan Province. Sophomores from the class of 2012 attended it, who were non-English majors. Students from Class A have passed CET-4, while students from Class B have not. After much preparation, such as pre-test, 2 Class A and 4 Class B were chosen out to do it.

### **3.2 Instruments**

In this study the questionnaire *non-English majors' learning burnout in college English* was used. This questionnaire was designed by researchers on the basis of some other questionnaires in this aspect, which turned out to be effective and reliable (Yang, 2004; Zhang, 2013a). According to the reality of college English learning, some necessary changes were made; finally the new questionnaire came into being, which contained 34 items from 3 dimensions: dejection, improper behavior and reduced personal accomplishment. Dejection refers to learners' indifference to study due to the lack of interest. For instance, it is not necessary to have English class in college. In this questionnaire, there were 14 items about dejection. Improper behavior is a phenomenon, in which learners are often late for class, or don't hand in their homework on time, or do something unrelated to English study in English classes, etc. for example, I often do something irrelevant to English class. In this questionnaire, 11 items were about it. As to reduced personal accomplishment, it refers to learners' low self-esteem due to their lack of confidence in English study. For instance, my English is very poor. There were 9 items in this questionnaire. To each item there were 5 choices from "I do not agree with it at all" to "I do not know" to "I can not agree with it any more". Each choice stood for scores from 1 to 5 respectively. Some choices were graded reversely. The higher the score is, the more serious the learning burnout is.

### **3.3 Procedure**

At the beginning of the third semester, researchers distributed the questionnaire among students from 4 Class A and 6 Class B, which were chosen out at random, in order to understand their status of learning burnout. And then the data were analyzed with the help of SPSS 19.0. At last students from school of computer, school of politics, school of chemistry, school of commerce, school of history and school of laws were chosen out to participate in the final research, because they all showed some kind of learning burnout, but their differences were not significant ( $p>0.05$ ), which was suitable for the next study. The study lasted one year.

Based on the previous results, students from school of politics, school of chemistry, school of commerce were arranged in one group, Group A, Experiment Group; students from school of computer, school of history and school of laws were arranged in Group 2, Control Group. In Experiment Group, teachers add a new part: presentation. Learners were asked to do presentation in a team, whose purpose was to give students a chance to show themselves, and enhance their ability. The students formed the team by themselves. In each team there were no more than 6 students. They chose a leader to organize the activity. The topic was about Chinese culture, which was made by the researchers. Each team should choose one topic that they were interested in, and made preparations for it. The researcher, the teacher, would check it regularly. After full preparations, each team should choose one or more students to present it to the whole class with the help of multimedia within 10 minutes. Later on the teacher and students would discuss the performance, and then give them a score, which would be regarded as one part of the learners' final score.

### **3.4 Data collected**

In this study 391 questionnaires were handed out, and 361 were valid. Among them 160 questionnaires were collected from Experiment Group, and 201 were collected from Control Group.

## **4. Results and Analysis**

With the help of SPSS 19.0 the results were listed as follows:

### **Dejection**

Table 1 clearly indicated that learners in Control Group got higher scores in dejection. It meant that students in Control Group were in a more serious status of learning burnout than those in Experiment Group. And the difference was significant ( $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, it was obvious that the new teaching mode, research teaching mode did make the learners' English learning interest enhanced. When learners' subjective initiative was respected, their learning passion would also be fueled. In this way their study, of course, would be promoted.

**Table 1 Difference between Two Groups in Dejection**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F
Control Group	201	35.4627	7.02850	.49575	.075**
Experiment Group	160	33.0188	7.38728	.58402	

### Improper Behavior

As was revealed in Table 2, learners in Control Group got higher scores than those from Experiment Group. It meant that students in Control Group stayed in a more serious status of English learning burnout. This difference was also significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). To sum up under research teaching mode learners learned to discover questions by themselves, analyze questions by themselves and solve them by themselves. All of these made them become interested in English study. Therefore, they displayed less improper behaviors. So as teachers, we must realize the importance of applying research teaching mode to college English classroom. With the new teaching activity, learners should decide how to form their own team, which topic to choose, how to arrange the job, and learn how to search information on the Internet. All these things were related to their ability, ability of communication between students, ability of using Internet, ability to make PPT, etc. in one word, their subjective initiative played an important role in this process. They became the leader of their study, and they arranged everything by themselves.

**Table 2 Difference between Two Groups in Improper Behavior**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F
Control Group	201	27.5920	6.16464	.43482	.028**
Experiment Group	160	25.6375	6.28514	.49688	

### 4.3 Reduced Personal Accomplishment

It revealed in Table 3 that students in Experiment Group got lower score in reduced personal accomplishment, and this difference was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). That meant with the new teaching mode students' self-esteem was enhanced. This was understandable: in the research teaching mode classroom, students had more chances to show themselves. With good preparations, their performance would be a nice one, which may result in other students' approval. Thus in this way they had much more confidence in themselves.

**Table 3 Difference between Two Groups in Reduced Personal Accomplishment**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F
Control Group	201	21.0547	4.95298	.34936	1.994*
Experiment Group	160	19.6813	5.57214	.44052	

## 5. Conclusion

Based on these data it was found that applying research teaching mode to college English classroom among non-English majors to help them relieve learning burnout was useful. The new teaching mode gives priority to learners' subjective initiative, respect students' leadership in learning process. In this way students may have much more interest in English learning. As the old saying goes, interest is the best teacher. With a stronger passion for English study, learners' learning burnout would be relieved. What's more, it can develop learners' creativity and teamwork as well.

Of course, there still exist some shortcomings. First, as to the formation of team, teachers should give more instructions. In this study, it is found that some learners whose English is not so satisfying, prefer to work with students with the same level. Sometimes they may find it difficult to make the presentation work. So they may feel anxious, which is bad to their study. Second, most of the materials they found in the Internet about English are Chinese. So they must translate them into Chinese, which requires the students have a good command of English, and translation skills. But to many non-English majors, it is a bit tough. Therefore, teachers must give them more help.

In conclusion it is practical to apply research teaching mode to relieving non-English majors' English learning burnout. During this process learners become the center of study, and they can arrange their study by themselves. Their learning interest in study would be promoted. In order to get a much more satisfying result, teachers should give them much more instructions.

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