Learner Autonomy and Learning Anxiety in English Class

Lin-Na ZHANG
Dalian Institute of Science and Technology, Dalian, China
346922929@qq.com

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, Learning Anxiety, Application

Abstract. The paper deeply makes research about the learner autonomy, learning anxiety and their relationship by comparison, problem-solution, data analysis, and experimental way. Finally, the students’ autonomy will be strengthened and students’ learning desire will be motivated. That can cultivate students’ learning method and improve teachers’ teaching method.

Current Problems in English Class

English education has increasingly become a decisive factor in enhancing the overall national strength and international competitiveness. English talents have increasingly become a strategic resource to promote the social development of globalization. English educational foundation, overall status and functions they play in the society all become more prominent. Personally, facing the competitive as well as developing world, meeting the challenge of knowledge economy, accepting a good English education has gradually become people’s first need to survive, develop and get good control of lifetime, which even decides the destiny.

There are a lot of problems existing in society, school, teachers and students. Society group only cares about the certificate and scores, while ignoring to a large extent the students’ capabilities of autonomous learning about English, as well as their learning anxiety in English. When students really went to work and found that the real urgency need was students’ high English ability rather than high-score in English.

Contemporary schools do not aim at developing student with English ability, such as basic English skills, comprehensive ability, critical thinking ability; but they just want them to get a high score in the papers partially.

In many schools, there are English teachers whose overall levels of teaching quality are not so competent. Due to the existence of examination oriented education, the original concept of teacher has been distorted. Under the pressure of examination oriented education, some teachers blindly pursue higher scores rates and their private fame and interests, so they change the original idea of “imparting knowledge and educating people”.

At school time, many tests make students become problem-solving machines. Frequent nationwide examinations and system tests in English class make student to be a score machine and a slave to English. They are in a serious loss of learning autonomy and learning anxiety.

Literature Review and Study Method

Learning autonomy refers to the capability to determine the learning objectives, select methods, monitor the procedure and evaluate the results (Zimmerman, 1996). [1] As Cotterall (1995) said autonomous learning can be defined as “the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking their learning”. [2] “Autonomy occurs when one uses personal processes to strategically monitor and control his or her behavior and the environment” (Chen, 2008). [3] In 2006, Meizhi Zheng emphasizes the importance of autonomy learning. [4] In 2012, M. Ohki & S. Hori. talks about the time management for the autonomous learning after class and anxiety.[5] In 2013, Yu Wenjie researched that autonomous learning makes the students in English classroom to learn strengths, which is according to the truth of their own situations. In 2016, M. Zhou examined a model of second language learning told that language performance depends on students' motivation and emotion. [6]
In the paper, the comparison way, data analysis, problem-solution way will be used to study the learner autonomy and learner anxiety.

**Definition of Learning Autonomy and Learning Anxiety**

**Definition of Learning Autonomy**

Comparing with the traditional study method about accepting knowledge simply, learning autonomy, as a kind of modern learning style, regards the students as the main and indispensable body of learning English autonomously in the English class. The students are not the machines who just are controlled by the others stupidly, being undisturbed by reading, listening, study, tremendous observations and vast number of practice means. That new learning style makes individuals to get continuous changes (knowledge and skills, the method and process, the improvement of emotion and value and sublimation). Autonomous learning, as the name implies, is strongly based on the fact that students are seen as the main body that join the learning through the analysis of the student’s independent exploration, practice, questioning and creation methods to achieve learning goals.

**The Concept of Learning Anxiety**

Anxiety describes that a student experiences excessive and uncontrollable worries about future and past events. Excessive attention is expressed to his own ability and important sense of consciousness. Anxious students tend to have a negative view of their coping abilities to tension causing by academic situation. They think they do not have the necessary skills to deal with a particular threat. Therefore, they think they have no control or loss of control. Anxious students often misunderstand or exaggerate the importance of the situation. If conditions are not properly managed, it may lead to predictions of landslides. Learning anxiety is that people tend to know. It is the psychological characteristics of learner to get some knowledge. It is a kind of inner strength that can promote people’s knowledge. And teachers should give special care and guidance, establish “preference for poor students” education idea, make the greatest efforts to support and influence them, which will efficiently make them gradually set foot on the ladder that is on the way of autonomous learning, and share knowledge of the fun and joy of success with other students. On the other hand, nothing is difficult if one put his heart into it, especially the knowledge which is supposed to been known by the students in English class.

**The Relationship between Learning Autonomy and Learning Anxiety**

**The Role of Learner Autonomy in Learning Anxiety**

Learning autonomy and learning anxiety is dependent on each other. Learning autonomously can make students to control the whole process of learning and reduce the anxiety coming from learning. Autonomous learning is a kind of active learning, which is based on the students’ learning as an inner need and anxiety. It is not a burden for students who has the anxiety to study and learn for them, but it is a very beautiful enjoyment even an excellent experience.

Comparing with traditional teaching thought of passiveness, autonomous learning is the concept of a new type of learning and teaching. In the process of making the individual autonomous learning, all activities are sufficient in the process of students’ learning. In the learning process at school, students have a full right to make self-determination. The autonomous learning makes the students are in the full zest in their own study research. The right of study and search got fully guaranteed so that students of English classroom will try hard. Their learning attitudes will change completely. In the English class, the teacher is no longer the authority who controls the English knowledge.

Furthermore, the students are no longer the passive and innocent recipients when they are learning knowledge. In the kind of learning, the teacher is also no longer the arbitrary and direct class monitor, but the designer and guider. Student is no longer in a rote learning way to acquire
knowledge as the machine, but the active learners of discovering knowledge and wisdom.

Autonomous learning makes the students in English classroom to learn things according to the real state of their own situations. That will make the best students more outstanding, and make the students whose foundation is not so good perform better to get corresponding improvement. Through learning willingly the anxiety will be conquered in the process of learning.

**The Reaction of Learning Anxiety to Learner Autonomy**

The process of overcoming the learning anxiety is to study autonomously. Learner autonomy regards the students as the center, fully respecting the students’ autonomy. It respects and develops the students’ learning style. The student in his learning has the authority to dominate. Under the controlling circumstances, students learn actively, and seek to develop a kind of activity. The formation of learning autonomy is a strong aspiration pushed by learning anxiety. Students have strong anxiety to learn, which will encourage the students to learn to make plan, adjustment, guidance, and self-reinforcing.

The reaction of learning anxiety to learner autonomy is efficient. First, they will prepare for future autonomous learning activities. As a student who has an anxiety to learn English in English class may independently accumulate English knowledge and autonomously research knowledge of English from a variety of fields. Students will prepare study and work in English autonomously. Second, it will promote the role of autonomous learning in the classroom. Anxiety is a strong emotional inclination, and creatively completes the current activities in the classroom. The desire of learning new things can promote the creative attitude for students in the English class. Anxiety can lead people to study, work and learn autonomously. Students who have a strong anxiety to learn for a course will train their creative thinking. Learner autonomy forms a strong anxiety to learn, and they develop their self-awareness and self-monitoring of learning, which is one of the important factors to promote students’ autonomous learning.

**The Application of the Study**

**Influence on the Teacher’s Method of Teaching**

In order to take advantage of the relationship between learner anxiety and learner autonomy, both the teachers and students will change and improve their ways both. Establishing a good relationship between teachers and students can create a peaceful and active English class atmosphere and encourage students to do more self-learning. Giving more enthusiasms is the easiest way to arouse the students’ learning anxiety. Therefore, teachers should get rid of the traditional focus on emotional communication between teachers and students without paying too much on the teacher’s dignity. It constantly establishes a democratic, harmonious, and peaceful relationship between teachers and students, and it helps teachers to create a comfortable environment for students. Using a variety of teaching methods, teachers cultivate anxiety, and change the fixed idea of “I am made to learn” to “I want to learn”. To guide students to study independently, an important aspect is expanding the teaching’s information transfer. In order to achieve the purpose of English class learning, teachers should teach the largest and most effective information most quickly, and accelerate and improve the learning efficiency. And the students in English class are no longer under the whole guidance of teachers. Students should try their best to grasp, transfer and study the information related with English courses.

If current education can cultivate the anxiety of learning English into learning need, the study can make the students from the original “I have to learn” to “I want to learn”, and gradually develop the habit of students autonomous learning about English in the English class. At first, students are the learners who are lack of strong will and strong perseverance, interest and anxiety due to difficult and tedious grammar in English. Only by continually arousing the students’ learning interest and the students’ anxiety, can teacher maintain their motivations to learn English in the English class. Therefore, teachers are supposed to be closely based on the initial purpose of teaching. They should
use a variety of teaching methods and forms, and constantly mobilize the interests and anxieties of students based on the characteristics of different students. About the teaching patterns, the teacher should not only make mechanical training in accordance with the contents of the textbook, but also make flexible training according to the specific circumstances consisted of various teaching materials. Teachers should also design class activity and create efficient atmosphere, and set up a number of scenarios for meaningful drills.

In a word, teachers should cultivate the students’ capacity of autonomous learning through designing various teaching activities used for autonomous learning, and try to consider the different level of students and the actual different situation of different students. Teachers should make bold innovations to achieve the goal that teaching is not only to teach.

**Influences on the Students’ Method of Learning**

Better learning method can help students to learn better. A kind of great and true method will play an important role in English learning. So students will be more interested in study.

The first step is to develop an individual or group learning plan to learn English in the English class. There exist many kinds of plans, such as time management plan, subject management plan, and target plan and so on. For example, in the group learning, Students should not only write down the plans on the paper, but also inform every student in the group. For example, each group should have clear learning objectives, and each team member should have the autonomous learning goal. Each task, and each time period of the task should be clear. Clear and fixed objectives should be included in the plan. Each student should know what they are doing and what to do. Each team should carry on the plan to monitor the implementation of incentive of studying.

The second step is to strengthen and deepen the capacity of time management by using the right study strategies. Students without learning subject on their own learning process will be without good capacity of observation, reflection and evaluation of themselves; Students will have no learning feedback based on learning anxiety; Students have no idea about how to adjust and strengthen the self-monitoring study, not alone to talk about “autonomous learning”. The key of autonomous learning is the reasonable allocation of time and careful arrangement. Students should grab the priority and get rid of the confusion cause by failed time management. To strengthen and deepen the capability of managing the time, they need to do things by plans and schedules to reach self-enrichment and the ideal learning state.

The third is to fully use the network to study autonomously. Students can use the multimedia to study at anytime and anywhere. There are a lot of learning resources in the internet for students to learn; at the same time, students can finish the assigned work and test by the teachers and mark their progress.

If the teacher’s speech is more detailed, students will learn more tiredly. If there is a very long time to instill the knowledge, students can not apply their knowledge to promote learning and learning to use. Passive acceptance will be difficult to digest, and students become representative of themselves completely and indifferently in the class. Autonomous learning tells students to respect knowledge and learn it all the time instead of “spare learning”. If students do not learn English autonomously pushed by learning anxiety, students are not able to see the interest of English in the English class.

**References**


