LITERATURE REVIEW ON TEACHING STRATEGIES AND MOTIVATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Within the educational setting of Chinese society, the study of teaching strategies holds a prominent position, capturing considerable scholarly interest, particularly in the setting of higher vocational education. Despite the attention devoted to teaching strategies, there exists a noticeable gap in understanding the motivation of teachers to employ these strategies and the factors influencing their choices, especially within the context of higher vocational education. Furthermore, insufficient research has been conducted on the distinctive characteristics of higher vocational education students and the backgrounds of teachers in higher vocational colleges. This paper aims to address these gaps by conducting a thorough review of existing literature on English teachers’ teaching motivation and the influencing factors in higher vocational colleges. Through the synthesis of relevant literature, the study seeks to shed light on the research deficiencies and the significance of exploring the motivation behind teaching strategies in higher vocational education settings. By bridging these gaps, the research contributes valuable insights that can inform educational practices and policy development in the dynamic landscape of higher vocational education in China. The outcomes of this study hold the potential to reshape educational paradigms and enhance the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches in higher vocational institutions, fostering a more enriching learning environment for both educators and students alike.

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INTRODUCTION

As the concept of quality education takes root in China, society places higher demands on the quality of English teaching in higher vocational education. Historically, English teaching in higher vocational colleges has suffered from insufficient emphasis on teaching quality, with overly traditional methods hindering the effectiveness of English instruction and impeding the development of higher vocational English teaching (Tuo, 2019). These challenges elevate the expectations for English teaching in higher vocational colleges. Therefore, English teachers in higher vocational colleges should consistently enhance the use of teaching strategies in classroom instruction and diversify their approaches. This improvement is crucial to elevating the teaching standards of the English subject and fostering applied talents capable of adapting to the evolving needs of society.

So, this paper primarily compiles literature on teaching strategies, teaching motivation, and related theoretical studies by numerous scholars. The objective is to examine and study the use of teaching techniques by English teachers in higher vocational colleges, their motivation for utilizing these strategies, and the factors influencing their motivation.

The main research objectives of this paper are to comprehend the challenges encountered by higher vocational English teachers in classroom teaching through the collection of relevant literature, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the study aims to investigate the motivation of higher vocational English teachers and the factors influencing their motivation, employing theories related to teaching strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper primarily employs the traditional literature review research method to examine existing domestic and international literature related to the subject area. The collected literature is organized and analyzed to establish a robust theoretical foundation for this research. The extensive review identifies research perspectives, current
status, and gaps in the chosen topic, contributing essential insights to this paper’s investigation.

Upon sorting and summarizing both domestic and international literature, it becomes evident that existing research on teacher teaching strategies and motivation predominantly centers on several key aspects. These include the types and construction of teacher teaching strategies, the definition of motivation, and the influencing factors of teacher motivation, encompassing both internal and external factors.

While current research has laid a solid theoretical groundwork for future investigations, there are notable shortcomings. Most notably, scholars tend to conduct research primarily at the macro level, with a lack of empirical theoretical research at the micro level. This gap is particularly noticeable in the context of China, where research often remains at the top level, resulting in a scarcity of theoretical achievements at the bottom level. This deficiency hampers guidance and reference materials for advancing the enhancement of teachers’ teaching strategies. Furthermore, independent research on teacher teaching strategies and motivations is prevalent, with limited specialized linkage studies addressing the correlation between improved teacher motivation and teaching strategies.

**RESEARCH ON TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Research on teaching strategies, both domestically and internationally, currently encompasses several key aspects. These include the definition and classification of teaching strategies, the impact of teaching strategies on learners, the construction of teaching strategies, and the study of factors influencing teachers in employing teaching strategies.

**Definition and Classification of Teaching Strategies**

Divergent viewpoints exist among scholars regarding the concept of teaching strategies. Teaching strategies as a teaching mode developed to achieve specific teaching goals (Huang, 2017). On the other hand, some scholars, view teaching strategy as a teaching approach, encompassing the sum of teaching methods utilized to master content and attain teaching objectives (Huang, 2017). These definitions hinge on teaching models, teaching behaviors, and teaching methods, suggesting a potential lack of a robust theoretical basis. Consequently, scholars have
initiated efforts to classify teaching strategies, aiming to render them more operational and practical.

Numerous scholars have studied the classification of teaching strategies, resulting in four main categories. Firstly, when considering the diverse purposes of teachers’ instructional behavior, teaching strategies are classified into organizing strategies, implementation strategies, and management strategies. Secondly, Saskatchewan Education has categorized teaching strategies into five main groups: direct teaching strategies, indirect teaching strategies, experiential teaching strategies, self-directed learning teaching strategies, and interactive teaching strategies. Lastly, teaching strategies have been divided into two categories—teacher-led and student-led—based on the differing levels of control exercised during teaching activities. These various classifications serve to alleviate the ambiguity surrounding the macro definition of teaching strategies (Huang, 2017).

**Construction of Teaching Strategies**

The use of innovative interactive teaching methods is an inevitable result, that is, regardless of the nature of the curriculum or subject, teaching innovation has become a popular vocabulary in academic institutions (Eli, 2021). Research on the construction of teaching strategies includes three main areas: teaching strategies for different types of university English courses, teaching strategies constructed from different theoretical perspectives, and teaching strategies constructed from foreign teaching strategies.

Firstly, many studies have attempted to explore the impact of corresponding teaching strategies on teaching effectiveness according to the different characteristics of university English content, such as vocabulary and translation. Thi Ngu et al. (2021) believe that we not only need to master historical terminology and themes well, but also combine language teaching with images, ICT tools, LCDs, and effective historical language. To teach economic subjects in English, we must pay attention to the key economic terms in each subject and regularly practice speaking and listening to convey effective information to students and promote effective communication within the classroom.

Under the concept of deep learning, researchers have proposed more detailed strategies for teaching deep learning of English vocabulary. Some researchers have also pointed out that learners lack block recognition and deep reading skills in translation and reading, and therefore propose teaching strategies for block recognition and deep
reading that can help learners improve their translation skills and enhance their deep reading skills (Huang, 2017).

Secondly, a lot of research has been conducted on teaching strategy construction from different theoretical perspectives. Wang (2018) proposes a strategy from the perspective of second language acquisition theory that can stimulate students’ interest and enthusiasm in learning English, continuously enrich the content and resources of university English teaching, innovate the forms and methods of English language input, and create a good English learning experience and practice environment (Wang, 2018).

Further, Zhang et al. (2021) have drawn on foreign models of teaching strategies, such as foreign-centered teaching strategies and Marzano’s nine teaching strategies, and have combined foreign teaching strategies with actual classroom teaching to propose new teaching strategies. The effective teaching strategies proposed by these scholars are important references for the adjustment of English teaching objectives, the optimization of teaching models, and the transformation of teachers’ and students’ roles (Huang, 2017).

A Study on the Role of Teacher Factors in Teaching Strategies

Much of the research on teaching strategies in the last decade has focused on the learner. However, the construction and application of teaching strategies should not only involve the learners’ own factors but also the teachers’ factors. Only when the teachers’ teaching philosophy is updated will there be changes in teaching strategies.

Yu and Qi (2016) explored the continuous transformation of the current philosophy of English teaching in colleges and universities, the content of teaching, teaching modes, and teaching methods, which has revealed that the choice of English teaching strategies has become an important factor in improving the teaching of English. They argue that factors influencing teaching strategies should not only take into account individual students’ factors but also teachers’ factors. Therefore, teachers, as implementers of teaching strategies, should give sufficient attention to the study of teaching strategies. However, only a few scholars have conducted research in this area, such as teachers’ perceptions of teaching strategies and factors that influence the use of teaching strategies (Yu & Qi, 2016). It was found that the use of teaching strategies by university English teachers was mainly influenced by teachers’ continuously updated and constructed concepts of blended learning (Huang, 2017).
Most past research on instructional strategies has focused on learners, and there has been significant neglect of research on the role of teachers. Yu and Qi (2016) argue that teachers should give sufficient attention to research on instructional strategies as implementers of instructional strategies. Teachers’ perceptions of teaching strategies may be an essential factor influencing English language teaching and learning, and the use of teaching strategies by university English teachers is primarily influenced by teachers’ continuously updated and constructed notions of blended learning (Huang, 2017; Wu & Duan, 2016).

**English Teaching Strategies in Higher Vocational Colleges**

*Teaching strategies for enhancing core competencies*

Wang (2022) believes that vocational English teachers should establish the concept of core literacy and implement teaching guided by it. Based on interpreting the connotation of core literacy, this paper comprehensively and deeply explores teaching strategies for cultivating core literacy from three perspectives: strengthening classroom interaction, reforming teaching methods, and improving English teachers’ understanding of core literacy. Tuo (2019) believes that vocational English courses contain rich curriculum content and are basic courses with humanistic characteristics. To fully implement the inheritance of excellent traditional culture in vocational English teaching, this article first analyzes the importance of integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture into vocational English course teaching and points out the problems in the current process of integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture into vocational English teaching. Finally, from optimizing teaching objectives, Starting by strengthening the construction of teaching staff, creating diversified teaching forms, and constructing a diversified evaluation system, we will explore teaching strategies for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into vocational English teaching, achieve the educational function of vocational English classrooms, and promote the better inheritance and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

**Experiential teaching strategies**

Currently, China’s vocational education is developing rapidly, and some innovative teaching methods and strategies are important means to promote the continuous improvement of vocational education. In recent years, experiential teaching methods have been promoted and
popularized, and have achieved good application results in vocational English teaching (Wang, 2022).

**Personalized teaching strategies**

Luo (2019) believes that vocational English teaching in the new era should also comply with the needs of the times, apply personalized teaching concepts to vocational English teaching, pay attention to individual differences of students, promote personalized development of students, and enable students at different levels to have the opportunity to showcase themselves, fully develop and continuously improve. Through understanding the connotation of personalized teaching and combining it with the current situation of vocational English teaching, Propose an effective way to apply personalized teaching to vocational English teaching during the transitional period, aiming to achieve effective individualized teaching, drive students’ initiative and enthusiasm in learning English, meet their internal learning needs, and promote students’ comprehensive and independent development.

**Informationization teaching strategy**

Zhu (2018) believes that under the influence of the social information environment, more and more advanced technologies are being widely applied in various fields of life. Education is no exception, and the development of technology has added many new devices to education and teaching, such as smartphones. English teachers should keep up with the development and progress of the times, fully utilize the advantages of smartphones, abandon the undesirable parts of traditional teaching models, and carry out comprehensive innovation in teaching forms, to make vocational English teaching interesting.

**Teaching strategies tailored to students’ job requirements**

Reeve (2018) believes that enabling students to grow into talents that meet the needs of future employment positions is the core goal of vocational teachers in conducting professional teaching and cultural courses. English courses occupy a certain position in the curriculum system of vocational colleges, and students’ English literacy and language application ability affect their competitiveness in the talent market. Therefore, English teachers need to face the needs of students’ employment positions to carry out teaching, Enable students to engage in targeted learning centered around employment, and gain professional knowledge and skills to adapt to workplace life through English
classrooms Hu et al. (2018) believes that starting from the educational model of higher vocational education, the main purpose of higher vocational education is to cultivate vocational and technical talents in the teaching process, and using the combination of engineering and learning as the main mode of talent cultivation not only helps to effectively improve students’ professional abilities and literacy but also to a certain extent makes them more proficient in life and work after entering society. This model should be applied effectively in various disciplines, it includes vocational English teaching.

RESEARCH ON TEACHER MOTIVATION

In recent years, learning motivation has been a hot topic in the field of motivation research, both in the field of education and in the field of psychology. The current research on teacher motivation is reflected in three main areas: factors affecting teacher motivation, the relationship between teacher motivation and student motivation, and the impact of teacher motivation on teaching effectiveness.

The Motivation of Teachers to Use Teaching Strategies

Differences in teaching objectives

Some scholars believe that one of the motivations for teachers to apply teaching strategies is to achieve different teaching objectives, as different teaching objectives require different teaching strategies. Alam (2021) argue that the introduction of role-playing teaching strategies in higher education provides positive and sufficient feedback on formation and development, which has a profound positive impact on students’ confidence and self-esteem. Research has also shown that a positive learning environment promotes inclusivity and improves the academic performance of teachers and students. The research findings will enable educators to help create and implement inclusive teaching and learning environments to improve learners’ expectations and academic performance. Pérez-Ordás et al. (2021) believe that the quality of courses should be evaluated. The effectiveness of SL courses is mainly reflected in their ability to help achieve the goals of students and the community.

The construction and application of teaching strategies should not only involve the learners’ own factors but also the teachers’ factors. Only when the teachers’ teaching philosophy is updated will there be changes in teaching strategies. Yu and Qi (2016) explored the continuous
transformation of the current philosophy of English teaching in colleges and universities, the content of teaching, teaching modes, and teaching methods, which has revealed that the choice of English teaching strategies has become an important factor in improving the teaching of English. They argue that factors influencing teaching strategies should not only take into account individual students’ factors but also teachers’ factors. Therefore, teachers, as implementers of teaching strategies, should give sufficient attention to the study of teaching strategies. However, only a few scholars have conducted research in this area, such as teachers’ perceptions of teaching strategies and factors that influence the use of teaching strategies (Yu & Qi, 2016). Wu and Duan (2016) suggested that teachers with different cognitive styles could also use different teaching strategies. It was found that the use of teaching strategies by university English teachers was mainly influenced by teachers’ continuously updated and constructed concepts of blended learning (Huang, 2017).

Most past research on instructional strategies has focused on learners, and there has been significant neglect of research on the role of teachers. Song (2019) believes that teachers should adopt various teaching methods and methods, playing the leading role of teachers and the main role of students. Teachers’ perceptions of teaching strategies may be an essential factor influencing English language teaching and learning, and the use of teaching strategies by university English teachers is primarily influenced by teachers’ continuously updated and constructed notions of blended learning (Huang, 2017).

Applicability is the theme and important feature of vocational education, and cultivating students’ technical skills through practical teaching is the goal and task of vocational education. However, influenced by the traditional concept of exam-oriented education, there is a theoretical bias in teaching management in higher vocational education. In the management process, emphasis is placed on teachers’ teaching while neglecting students’ learning; with emphasis on hardware investment, and insufficient investment in practical teaching management. The rapid development of higher vocational education currently provides a large number of professional talents for society and has received widespread praise from society. However, in the cultivation of vocational education talents, vocational education places too much emphasis on theory and lacks practical teaching (Schneider et al., 2023). Higher vocational education is an important component of China’s current higher education system. Due to long-term adherence to the
management philosophy of general higher education, which does not match the expected management characteristics of higher vocational education, there are problems such as poor communication mechanisms, incomplete funding mechanisms, and insufficient cooperation between schools and enterprises. In response to these issues, measures have been proposed to connect various links of vocational education, improve the funding mechanism for vocational education, and innovate the “school-enterprise combination” education model.

Complete teaching tasks
With the continuous development of society and economy, communication between countries has become increasingly frequent. English is an internationally recognized language during international exchanges. To better adapt talent cultivation to the objective development needs of society, the importance of English in educational and teaching activities is also constantly increasing. For example, in the teaching of business English, Wang (2022) believes that during the teaching period of business English in vocational colleges, teachers should attach great importance to the continuous cultivation of students’ cross-cultural communication awareness, cross-cultural communication ability, and targeted improvement of students’ English application ability, thereby ensuring the overall teaching effect and promoting students’ individual abilities to meet social needs.

Adapt to student characteristics
The teaching strategies of vocational colleges should effectively serve the growth of students and, within the allowed framework of conditions, attempt to adopt an interdisciplinary “integrated” training model to provide students with more learning choices and create conditions for them to achieve their dreams. Yin (2021) believes that career planning is a necessary step for college students before entering the workplace. Higher vocational education not only requires students to master professional knowledge but also has high requirements for professional practice. A good career plan is a strong guarantee for the future career path of college students. Yin (2021) believes that in the process of second language acquisition, individual differences such as learning motivation, personality, language aptitude, and age have a significant impact on the effectiveness of students’ second language acquisition. Therefore, in the process of public English teaching in vocational colleges, teachers can adopt corresponding teaching strategies.
such as learner-centered, reasonable treatment of language output, input of understandable language materials, and graded teaching, to improve the ability of English learners to master the knowledge of the English language they have learned. Zhang et al. (2021) mentioned the construction of a vocational education system that runs through various academic stages and connects various industries, adopting vocational education methods such as “combining engineering with learning”, putting people first, science first, and emphasizing moral education.

Factors affecting teacher motivation

National and international research on the factors influencing teachers’ motivation has focused on two areas: the factors influencing teachers’ motivation at entry and the factors influencing in-service teachers’ motivation.

Yildiz Durak (2021) studied the relationship between teachers’ level of technical education content knowledge (TPACK) and their self-efficacy, technical literacy, and social network usage goals in integrating technology. Its research has found that in teacher education, to achieve effective technology integration, it may be useful to encourage teachers’ own beliefs and focus on developing their own beliefs in technology integration practices.

A large body of early research suggests that the main drivers of teacher entry are intrinsic motivations, such as pursuing knowledge development potential, improving professionalism, and so on, while external motivations are mainly influenced by factors such as the social environment and play medium to a low role (Huang, 2017).

In addition, in studies on the factors influencing teachers’ motivation for research, many studies have shown that teachers’ motivation for research is mainly influenced by external motivation and that external motivation is more incredible than internal motivation. The lack of intrinsic motivation is attributed to a lack of competence and confidence, time, and the influence of academic qualifications and teaching positions (Huang, 2017).

FINDINGS

Through sorting and summarizing domestic and foreign literature, it is found that current research on teacher teaching strategies and motivation mainly focuses on the following aspects: firstly, the types and
construction of teacher teaching strategies, secondly, the definition of motivation, and thirdly, the influencing factors of teacher motivation, including internal and external influencing factors of teacher motivation.

The current research on teacher teaching strategies and motivation has built a solid theoretical foundation for future research, which has important reference value. However, there are still some shortcomings, which are reflected in the following aspects: firstly, from the current perspective, most scholars are conducting research from the macro level, lacking empirical theoretical research at the micro level, especially in China where most research remains at the top level and there are few theoretical achievements at the bottom level, lack of guidance and reference for promoting the improvement of teachers’ teaching strategies. Secondly, most scholars have conducted independent research on teacher teaching strategies and motivations, and have not conducted specialized linkage studies on the improvement of teacher motivation and teaching strategies. Thirdly, there is currently a lack of research by scholars on the application of constructivist theory and activity theory to teachers’ teaching strategies and motivations.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing the research on teaching strategies by numerous scholars both domestically and internationally, we found that foreign research on teaching strategies mainly focuses on the definition and classification of teaching strategies, the impact of teaching strategies on learners, and the exploration of effective teaching strategies. In contrast, research on teaching strategies in China mainly focuses on the construction of teaching strategies. Some scholars have also explored and studied the factors that affect the use of teaching strategies by teachers, such as their cognitive style and beliefs. In addition, there is relatively little research on teacher motivation both domestically and internationally. The main research focuses on the factors that affect teacher motivation, the relationship between teacher motivation and student motivation, and the impact of teacher motivation on teaching effectiveness.

Therefore, through questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, and teacher interviews with teachers, the current status of teacher teaching strategies, their motivations for applying teaching strategies, and influencing factors will be revealed, to optimize existing teacher
motivation models and teaching strategies, to enhance the teaching level of Chinese teachers.

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