Research on Chinese University Students' Needs, Goal-orientation, and Self-regulated Strategies in an ESL Class

Yiqi Chui

Zhongyuan University of Technology, Zhengzhou, Henan, 450007, China

Abstract: In order to enhance the teaching efficiency and effectiveness of university teachers in teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) courses, a study focusing on needs cognition, goal orientation, and the application of self-directed learning technologies among college students in this classroom environment has been carefully conducted. This study adopted a rigorous descriptive design, in which the researchers used an approved survey questionnaire as a data collection tool to ensure the scientific validity and credibility of the study. A total of 340 responses were obtained from 2600 students enrolled in four institutions in specific regions located in the central region of China. According to the results, non-English major students taking ESL programs do not significantly differ in their responses to demands, accomplishment goal orientation, or self-regulated learning strategies. Additionally, this study showed a significant relationship between the needs, goal orientation, and self-regulated strategies of non-English major students enrolled in university ESL classes. This suggests that the more frequently a student uses a self-regulated strategy, the stronger their needs are, and the greater their goal orientation.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted in today's culture that students ought to be in charge of their own education. Students are therefore expected to recognize their requirements, concentrate on their objectives, develop tactics, and exercise self-control in order to acquire ESL. More than 20 years ago, the notion that students ought to take charge of their own education first surfaced, along with the importance of self-regulated procedures in language acquisition, especially in the context of learning English.

For a very long time, English has dominated communication on a global level. The influence of English language education is growing as a result of growing internationalization and globalization. Krashen (2021) noted that there was a significant English fever among students in Asia [1], especially China, who continued their English studies after fulfilling the prerequisites for university study. Today, the majority of university English courses are taught "after 00," having experienced the Internet's rapid development and the rise in popularity of clever electrical gadgets. The question of whether the objectives, prerequisites, and methods of teaching English in the modern day have altered, as well as if the new phase of university teaching has brought about any changes in English

learning goals, emerged.

The lack of correlation between foreign language instruction in secondary schools and university language education is a severe issue, so it's critical to establish the right English learning perspective in universities, address the psychological imbalance of the transitional period, and clearly state the objectives of English studies.

Several experts and writers have extensively acknowledged the importance of requirements analysis in the formulation and implementation of English language courses, regardless of whether they are regular ESL courses or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). A needs analysis has been used in previous studies to determine the requirements of English language learners. These findings clarify ESL experts, which gives particular significance to considering students' demands. If students do badly in basic courses, it may have an impact on their confidence in their abilities to pursue their majors. In a similar vein, subpar academic results might cause pupils to lose faith in their capacity for learning. Additionally, poor academic achievement weakens students' academic endurance and has a detrimental effect on their drive and self-control, (Hardy, 2014) [2].

Achievement goal orientation and self-regulated learning techniques have emerged as two of the most popular study areas in Chinese language education in recent years. They are closely related to the academic success of students. Most of the research that has already been done has mostly looked at the relationship between achievement target orientation and English accomplishment, or more specifically, the relationship between self-regulated learning and English performance. The current college English teaching approach uses "student-centeredness" as the teaching goal to carry out various teaching activities. This is because understanding the relationship between students' needs and goal orientation and strategies can provide teachers with a certain reference value for teaching college English. Additionally, there are very few studies that combine students' needs with goal orientation and strategies to examine college students' performance in English classrooms.

Regarding the needs, however, there aren't many studies or researches that examine how ESLLs' demands relate to any other elements. To investigate the needs, goal orientation, and self-regulated strategy use of English Language Learners, further study on the interaction between needs, goal orientation, and self-regulated methods is needed. Studying the relationships among many elements, such as ESL learning habits, May significantly improve our comprehension of the teaching and learning processes, especially with success metrics. This component alone might lead to significant progress in the fields of education and learning, especially when it comes to measuring performance indicators.

The results of this study can be used to propose ESL teaching to researchers and teachers. It will also include a list of appropriate teaching resources and strategies created by teachers to correspond with the students' present ESL competency levels.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Needs

The world economy is becoming more globalized, and China's economy is growing, so society needs more professionals with high levels of English proficiency. However, college students' current level of English proficiency is not up to par with what society needs in this new international environment. Needs analysis is the process of determining and evaluating students' learning requirements. Needs are the engine of learning and the primary component that piques students' interest and desire to learn (He, 2020) [3].

In the field of ESL class, a needs analysis serves as the foundation for curriculum development and implementation, similar to how physicians diagnose patients before prescribing medications (Luo, 2015) [4]. The ESL course can accommodate students with varying goals, skill levels, and

nationalities thanks to needs analysis. A well-established needs analysis can be a useful tool for developing curricula and policies for foreign language instruction.

A needs analysis directs the creation of curricula and courses. Intensive language schools and institutions are necessary in addition to the essential courses. Chinese university graduates are enrolling more often in public and private language institutes in an effort to improve their communication skills. On the other hand, empirical research has demonstrated that there are few English courses that Chinese university graduates must take in order to get employed. The University English needs analysis can offer administrators and English instructors a comprehensive and focused response in the context of the always evolving reform of university English education (Lin, 2019) [5].

The phrase "needs analysis" describes a systematic, ongoing process of learning about the requirements and preferences of students, evaluating the information gathered, and then selecting suitable courses based on the analysis of the information (Sieglová 2019) [6]. A wide range of elements are included in needs, including desires, demands, expectations, justifications, limitations, and shortages.

To choose the right teaching strategy, resources, and learning goals, a needs analysis must be conducted. Todea and Demarcsek (2017) propose that a comprehensive requirements analysis should serve as the foundation for both the development of teaching materials and the content of ESL curricula [7]. As for the purpose of needs analyses, it is generally known that both ESL teachers and students gain from them. Language teachers may find out what skills pupils want to learn and what challenges they have by doing a needs assessment. One benefit of conducting a needs analysis is that it gives students the ability to reflect on their own needs, identify their own wants, and take charge of their own education (Sieglová 2019)[6]. In the realm of ESL training, the requirements analysis method is vital since it evaluates both objective and subjective information.

China's theoretical requirements analysis research started a little bit later than that of other countries in terms of domestic needs analysis studies. The need analysis theory was brought to China about 2000 and is now a fundamental component of educational instruction. Demand analysis must be prioritized in the construction of customized university English courses, according to Ma (2015) [8].

As a result, these studies offer English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher's insightful information about the importance of considering the requirements of the target learners when developing and implementing successful teaching strategies and materials.

2.2 Goal Orientation

Setting and achieving objectives helps learners stay motivated to finish their learning activities, and the methods by which they do so reveal the attitudes and methods that language learners employ in their quest of language acquisition. According to Schunk (2005) [9], goals can provide students the drive they need to finish assignments. Different aims elicit different behavioral, emotional, and cognitive responses. Goal orientation is a broad category of concepts leading to various ways of participating in situations involving achievement. For ESLLs, goal-directed actions are very important since their beliefs greatly influence how they engage in different learning activities (Midgley et al., 2001).A set of goals determines which students participate in accomplishment activities [10].

Accomplishment goal theory dominated accomplishment motivation in the 1990s and 2000s, especially in educational settings (Elliot & Huliman, 2017) [11]. Motivation has been extensively studied in contemporary psychological theories and is largely acknowledged as a major driver of academic conduct. In recent decades, the Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) has gained significant

recognition as a critical viewpoint due to its role as a stimulant for copious research that has clarified people's behavior when using English as an ESLL.

The link between the mastery and performance goal orientations in the accomplishment goal orientation (AGO) theory and the academic achievement, assimilation, well-being, and engagement of English language learners (ESLLs) has been the subject of much research.(Anderman, 2015) According to Lin (2019) [5, 12], the mastery goal orientation is the desire to develop proficiency and improve knowledge and comprehension via focused study, whereas the performance goal orientation is the desire to get positive evaluations of one's abilities. Four aspects have been added to the accomplishment goal theory after many years of development: performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals; mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance goals.

English as a Second Language Learner (ESLL) that demonstrate a mastery approach goal orientation have a strong propensity towards attaining mastery in academic problems, according to the 2x2 paradigm put forward by the AGO. On the other hand, ESLLs who have a mastery avoidance goal orientation show a propensity to steer clear of any possible misinterpretations related to the task. Students with a performance-approach goal orientation like to highlight their greater competency over that of their peers. On the other hand, pupils who prioritize avoiding circumstances where they appear less competent than their classmates are those who have a performance-avoidance goal orientation. This specific model has been shown to be a reliable and viable framework by empirical data.

High accomplishment objectives were associated with greater negative performance, while high mastery goals were associated with higher ESL performance among high school students. Stan and Oprea (2015) found that test anxiety was much lower in ESLLs with high mastery targets [13]. Wang (2020) ascertained 817 college students' academic successes [14], Meta cognitive techniques, and attainment aims. A number of accomplishment goals were included in the study, such as mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals. The researchers also looked at meta-cognitive techniques, which included organizing, altering, keeping track of, and evaluating processes.

2.3 Self-Regulated Strategies

The majority of effective ESLLs employ suitable learning techniques, and using learning strategies enhances learning outcomes. The importance of strategies in ESL learning is that teachers must understand the link between their students' methods and their own.

ESL learning techniques are often related to input, which includes handling, storing, and retrieving incoming messages. According to Su and Min-Hsun (2005) [15], the capacity of learners to adapt methods to their unique learning environment and their degree of flexibility in choosing strategies is what separates effective ESLLs from less successful ones. Furthermore, research shows a substantial correlation between academic achievement and the personal qualities that help ESLLs become more autonomous learners and build resilient characters.

According to Richardson and Swan (2016), self-regulated learning (SRL) approaches, as defined by Zimmerman, are deliberate and purposeful actions and processes used by ESLLs in order to gain knowledge or improve their skills [16]. In the context of teaching English as a second language, SRL has been described in a variety of ways, but the capacity of English language learners (ESLLs) to use strategies that are advantageous to their learning process is still the essential component. The categories stated above include factors related to resource management, motivation, metacognition, and cognition.

Many approaches to self-regulated learning are influenced by a broad range of theoretical perspectives. Three main components make up both the cognitive model and the Sasson & Dori

(2012) SRL model proposed by his successors [17]. These components are cognition, meta-cognition, and motivation. Pintrich (1999) suggested a paradigm that includes resource management, self-regulatory methods, meta-cognitive strategies, and cognitive strategies the 1960s, 1970s [18], and 1980s, the self-regulatory approach was understood as an adaptation process, a sort of behavior, and a mix of cognitive behavior and activities. Self-regulatory tactics are currently recognized by most academicians as a sort of conduct and thought that lessens both physical harm and mental stress in emergency circumstances. There are three categories of self-regulated learning strategies: Resource management, which includes time management, effort control, peer learning, and help-seeking; Meta-cognitive techniques, which include meta-cognition; and Cognitive strategies, which include rehearsal, elaboration, organization, and critical thinking.

The study of self-regulation techniques in ESL classes has benefited greatly from the efforts of both domestic and foreign scholars. The use of methods and students' ESL learning results were shown to be positively correlated by researchers studying language learning strategies (Chien, 2012) [19]. Students may monitor and regulate their emotions as well as their academics with the help of SRL methods, creating a more favorable atmosphere for ESL learning. Lai and Hwang(2016)[20] believe that if combined with self-regulated learning (SRL) technology, flipping online English as a Second Language (OESL) learning strategies can provide better ESL learning results [21].

A growing number of scholars around the country have started to acknowledge the importance of self-efficacy as a predictor of success. According to the study's findings, there is a positive association between self-efficacy and English scores among ESLLs. The higher the self-efficacy, the stronger the sense of efficiency.

3. Methodology

In order to investigate the link between three variables—needs, goal orientation, and strategies—this study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. The results were explained and analyzed using numerical data.

With the use of the Raosoft calculator and purposeful sampling, 340 out of 2600 students from 4 institutions in certain provinces in central China were selected as respondents. Despite not majoring in English, they have attended or are currently taking ESL classes taught by professors from their institutions' English departments within the School of Foreign Languages. Each participant used the online questionnaire data collecting tool "Questionnaire Star" on their smartphone to complete the questionnaire under the supervision of the participating schools' professors.

Combining three separate questionnaires, the instrument was used to measure achievement goals orientation in terms of mastery-approach goal orientation, mastery-avoidance goal orientation, performance-approach goal orientation, and performance-avoidance goal orientation. The final component measures self-regulated learning strategies in terms of cognitive strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, and resource-management strategy. The first part of the instrument analyzes students' needs in terms of learners' problems differences in English learning, expectations about their teachers, attitudes toward assessment/evaluation, and differences for learning environments.

By examining frequency, mean, and standard deviation, descriptive statistics are utilized to comprehend the requirements analysis, goal-orientation, and self-regulated techniques used by non-English majors in ESL classes. To find out if there is a potential link between students' needs analysis, goal orientation, and self-regulated techniques, Pearson correlation analysis is used. To find out if applying needs analysis, goal orientation, and self-regulated techniques improves their interactions, multiple linear regression analysis is used.

4. Results

The respondents are mostly non-English language learners, male, senior. In terms of needs, respondents agreed that they own several needs to learn English in ESL class. Learners' preferences are the most essential factor, followed by their expectations of teachers and the methods of assessment and evaluation, with the various problems ranking last.

In regard to goal orientation, respondents agreed that they employed the mastery-approach orientation the most in their ESL learning process. They also employed the performance-approach orientation and the mastery-avoidance orientation, with the performance-avoidance orientation being utilized the least. Respondents agreed that they use self-regulated learning strategies. They primarily employ cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, as well as some resource management strategies. There is no significant difference existing in the responses on needs, achievement goal orientation, and self-regulated learning practices among individuals who are not pursuing English as their major in an English as a Second Language (ESL)classroom setting. There is a significant relationship between the needs of non-English major students, their orientation toward achievement objectives, and their self-regulated learning strategies in ESL classes. A proposed training program is devised based on the results of the study.

5. Recommendations

The university teacher teaching development center may establish an English coordination hotline that regulates and supervises general English programs and English programs for career paths across all departments. This would address the requirements and suggestions of the researchers and facilitate the attainment of English proficiency goals at this university. The Ministry of Education may establish policy and the initiation of a conversation between the administration and students as means to consider the ideas of students and align them with the internal aims and rules of the university. To encourage self-regulation among language learners ducators may provide students with numerous opportunities to assume responsibility for their education. Learners of a language must comprehend that, rather than passively following the instructor's instructions, they must actively participate in their education by selecting from the various options provided by the teacher. In addition, language instructors may prioritize complex, open-ended activities, as engaging students in basic, closed activities will not result in the development of self-regulation. Language instructors may carefully orchestrate instruction to equip students with the domain and strategy knowledge they need to operate independently, assist them in making appropriate decisions, and encourage them to extend their capabilities by attempting difficult tasks. The proposed training program may be tabled, reviewed, implemented and evaluated to enhance and develop teaching skills of university teachers. Future researchers may conduct related studies exploring on other similar variables.

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