

A review of research on English learning among students majoring in physical education in Chinese universities

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Keywords: PE majors in university, Public English, Research overview

Abstract: The research on English teaching for college sports majors is meaningful for English learning. This article summarizes the research results on English learning for sports major students in Chinese universities from four dimensions: current situation investigation and cause analysis, measures and suggestions, learning motivation and attitude, listening and reading ability and learning strategies. It attempts to propose practical research directions to promote the effectiveness of English learning for sports major students in universities.

1. Introduction

In 2004, China's Ministry of Education issued Teaching Requirements for College English Courses (Trial), which formulated the teaching requirements for English learning for non English major undergraduate students in universities. The learning objectives were set at general, higher, and higher levels for listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, and vocabulary, and specific guidance was provided for English teaching outside universities from four aspects: curriculum design, teaching mode, teaching evaluation, and teaching management. In 2007, the Ministry of Education revised the "Requirements", requiring universities to scientifically and systematically develop teaching syllabi that are suitable for the characteristics of the school based on its actual situation, to guide college English teaching. According to the requirements, there have been improvements in non English major English teaching and physical education major English teaching in universities, and research on English teaching for physical education major students has made certain progress. In teaching practice, the importance of learning English for physical education majors in universities has not been deeply recognized, and related research even tends to underestimate the teaching of physical education English.

In the 1990s, research on English teaching for Chinese sports majors began to develop. Using the principles of structuralist linguistics and behaviorist psychology, Tian Hui proposed four steps of cognitive habit teaching method: presenting new materials, explaining and practicing structures, situational exercises, and communicative activities, in order to promote the English communication ability of physical education majors. [19] Dai Zhongming analyzed the current situation and existing problems of college English teaching at Nanjing Sport University from the aspects of student source status, learning environment, faculty strength, teaching requirements, and assessment system, and accordingly put forward suggestions to promote the quality of college English teaching.[18] There

is still room for further exploration in the research on English learning among college students majoring in physical education, both in terms of quantity and depth. A total of 178 articles were retrieved on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) under the theme of "Teaching English for Physical Education Majors", and similarly, 178 articles were retrieved under the theme of "Learning English for Physical Education Majors". From the perspective of content and direction, most studies have investigated the current situation of English learning among students majoring in physical education in universities, analyzed the reasons for the problems, and proposed suggestions for solving them.

The effectiveness of public English teaching for sports majors is not ideal. From the perspective of teaching and learning, teachers and students are the two main factors that affect learning outcomes. The article discusses the development of relevant research from four aspects, sorts out the research directions of English learning for college sports majors, in order to provide new ideas for future research.

2. A Review of Public English Research for College Sports Majors

2.1. Research on Current Situation Investigation and Root Cause Analysis

The poor effectiveness of public English teaching in sports majors is a common problem among universities across the country. The weak English foundation among students majoring in cultural and sports is a problem that exists before entering universities, and the root cause is not in English teaching in universities. The current situation of English teaching and learning in sports majors is that students have low English proficiency and weak initiative in learning; Universities do not attach enough importance, English classrooms are lifeless, and teachers have a single teaching mode and simply follow the textbook. According to the research on the survey subjects of students from Henan University's Physical Education Institute, the current situation of English learning in sports majors can be summarized as follows: poor English foundation; Low awareness of the importance of English; Less time investment in English learning; Negative attitude towards English learning; The atmosphere of English learning is negative; The arrangement of English courses is unreasonable.[1]

The factors that lead to difficulties in English teaching for students majoring in physical education in universities are multidimensional. Vertically, it is a historical issue before enrollment. Horizontally, multiple dimensions such as teachers, students, and schools have also brought significant impacts. Therefore, when it comes to this issue, it cannot be attributed to any one aspect unilaterally, or regarded as an absolute reason for one of the links. A comprehensive and integrated analysis, investigation, and research are needed.

Factors related to students. Firstly, students majoring in sports have weak English foundations and varying levels of proficiency. The complexity of student sources inevitably leads to uneven levels of English proficiency, which also increases the difficulty of college English teaching for sports majors.[9] Secondly, students majoring in physical education in universities have weak motivation for English learning, a passive and negative learning state, an improper learning attitude, and insufficient self-confidence. Due to students' previous unsuccessful English learning experiences, they lack a sense of achievement in learning, resulting in a lack of initiative in English learning.[15] Thirdly, students have insufficient mastery of learning strategies, inappropriate learning methods, and excessive dependence on teachers. The overall situation of English learning strategies for sports majors is not optimistic, therefore, effectively cultivating students' learning strategies is an important task for English teachers.[14] In addition, relevant studies have explored students' psychological barriers, professional training pressure, and poor English learning environment.

From the perspective of teachers. Firstly, it is the mindset of teachers who hold a stereotypical impression of physical education students as "cultural underachievers" and teach them in a perfunctory manner without targeted teaching tailored to their needs. Secondly, the selection of teaching content is inappropriate, detached from the learning situation of physical education students, and not effectively combined with the learning characteristics and professional features of physical education students. At present, many physical education students and non physical education students in universities use the same textbook, which is difficult in content, has a high vocabulary rate, lacks strong professional relevance and practicality, and is not well coordinated with the characteristics of physical education students themselves.[6] The third issue is that the selection of teaching methods and tools is relatively single, with "cramming" dominating the classroom and "formulaic" relying on textbooks and teaching plans, leading to the dilemma of "students unwilling to learn and teachers unwilling to teach".[7] In addition, the unreasonable arrangement of English courses and insufficient study time are also the main influencing factors.

2.2. Research on Suggestions and Solutions for Measures

Regarding the current situation of English teaching for physical education students, research has also provided corresponding measures and suggestions for problem-solving. As the main body of learning, students are the fundamental and internal cause of problems, determining the progress of the entire English learning process. Therefore, the measures and suggestions proposed from the perspective of students are very worthy of attention. English learning requires full utilization of subjective initiative, and students' motivation and initiative in learning are key factors in unleashing their subjective initiative.

Students are the main body of learning, and enhancing their proactive learning awareness and motivation is the primary task in solving problems. In terms of proactive initiative and active learning awareness, relevant research has also proposed various measures and suggestions. One is to guide students to adopt a correct learning attitude and clarify learning objectives.[1] Teachers should help students truly understand the importance of English learning in academic, employment, and future development, encourage them to increase their confidence, set scientific learning goals, actively learn, and constantly challenge and improve their English grades. The second is to cultivate their strategic awareness and timely use appropriate learning strategies in English learning to promote English learning.[14] It is important to guide students to learn and master effective learning methods and strategies, make good use of classroom learning time according to the situation of professional learning and the characteristics of English learning, improve learning efficiency, and achieve twice the result with half the effort in English learning. The third is to strengthen students' awareness of self-directed learning through a combination of formative assessment and summative assessment, using formative assessment as an evaluation model.[17]

From the perspective of teaching. One is to cultivate a harmonious teacher-student relationship and enhance the interest of sports students in learning English.[2] The teaching philosophy of "student-centered" should be advocated, where the relationship between teachers and students in teaching is a sequential relationship of knowledge acquisition, rather than a hierarchical relationship. It is essential to guide teachers in establishing a service-oriented educational mentality, enhancing teaching affinity, and building equal, harmonious relationships with students. The second is to break down the psychological barriers in students' learning of English, provide timely psychological counseling, gradually correct their learning motivation, and transform their motivation into learning motivation, gradually develop good study habits, and improve their English learning level. Research suggests that English learning anxiety is more severe among students majoring in sports. Therefore, English teachers should adopt learner centered teaching methods and create a relaxed, pleasant,

friendly, and harmonious learning environment in the classroom.[4]Thirdly, based on students' learning situation, adopt a hierarchical teaching mode. By grouping students according to their college entrance exam and entrance English test scores, classes can be tailored to match their proficiency levels. Implementing layered teaching in college language learning for physical education students can improve the efficiency of classroom teaching, tap into students' English potential, optimize teaching resources, achieve diversified teaching, and cultivate high-quality language application talents in all aspects.[3]The fourth is to emphasize the teaching of English learning strategies, increase the training objectives of learning strategies, and systematically cultivate students' learning strategies. Teachers should help students establish correct English learning concepts and adopt appropriate learning strategies. In addition, tailored textbooks should be developed based on the characteristics of the profession to ensure they are suitable for students' needs. A variety of flexible and engaging learning activities should also be introduced to enhance their learning experience; Focusing on the cultivation of student learning behavior norms and exploring related perspectives to improve student learning outcomes are also some research directions.

2.3. Research on Learning Motivation and Learning Attitude

There is a positive correlation between learning motivation and attitude and learning outcomes, and positive learning motivation and attitude can produce positive learning outcomes. Therefore, it is of practical significance to enhance the motivation and attitude of sports students in learning English.

In order to understand the English learning motivation of sports majors, some studies have developed motivation scales based on students' characteristics. For example, from a psychological perspective, Hu Min divides the factors that affect the English learning motivation of sports majors into two dimensions of subjective and objective considerations. Subjective factors, starting from learners, include three dimensions: learning attitude, English foundation, and self-confidence; Objective factors involve external learning factors: teachers and teaching, goal setting and direction, and surrounding environment.[16] The research method starts from the difference between internal and external factors in dialectics. The internal factors that students generate for problems are the first and determine their learning motivation; Factors outside of students are external factors that affect learning motivation. To accurately measure the learning motivation intensity of sports majors, Wang Shen and Chen Chen selected 188 sports majors from a university in Tianjin as the test sample and proposed five common factors that affect English learning in sports majors in universities: using English as a professional tool, English learning interest, self challenge, external force, and using English as a language tool. [11]This motivation scale has high reliability, good discrimination, and can accurately measure the learning motivation and attitude of college sports majors. It has certain practical significance for the investigation and research of English learning motivation among students majoring in physical education.

The research on measures to promote English learning motivation among sports students is also a major research direction. Overall, the research has focused on students and teaching, proposing directions for teaching development and reform. Reforming and innovating teaching methods, fully utilizing modern teaching aids, conducting evaluations based on students' characteristics, and emphasizing application abilities are common research topics in curriculum reform. Subjective initiative, goal setting, and learning strategies are also important research directions. For example, Yang Qin proposed from the research on the concept of self-directed learning that teachers and students must fully recognize the importance of self-directed learning in English learning; The English textbooks used by students majoring in sports should better meet their professional needs to

enhance their learning interest and stimulate their learning motivation. Students should gradually learn to use learning strategies under the guidance of teachers.[13] Researching the factors contributing to English learning fatigue, Yu Kaihui proposed two suggestions for physical education majors: firstly, to adopt effective strategies to strengthen students' non intellectual factors, tap into their potential for learning English, and enhance their motivation and interest in learning English; The second is to supplement external resources to build a diversified language learning environment and enrich learning content, inspiring their enthusiasm and potential to constantly supplement and acquire new resources.[10] In addition, research on promoting English learning motivation among physical education students has also been involved in learning strategies, psychological counseling, teacher abilities, teaching methods, and textbook selection.

2.4. Research on Listening and Reading Ability and Strategic Awareness

The role of strategic learning in English learning is positive. In fact, students majoring in sports have a low frequency of strategy use and are not good at using learning strategies, making it difficult for them to effectively utilize strategies to improve their English learning level. For example, students lack the ability to improve their listening and reading skills through scientific strategies. Related research starts from vocabulary learning strategies, investigates the current situation and existing problems of students' use of vocabulary learning strategies, and proposes measures and suggestions for strategy learning to achieve the teaching goal of vocabulary learning effectiveness.

Generally speaking, students' listening ability learning is not given enough attention, their willingness to practice listening is insufficient, their use of listening learning strategies is limited, and their listening proficiency is not high. Most studies suggest that listening strategies can help learners improve their listening abilities. Regarding this issue, Wei Yannan conducted a study on the use of listening learning strategies among students majoring in sports. A 15 week listening strategy training was conducted on the experimental class, and after comparing the data of the control class with similar conditions before, during, and after the strategy training, the conclusion was drawn that sports students use less listening strategies; The use of listening strategies by high scoring students is superior to that of low scoring students; Listening strategies are helpful for listening ability, and it has been proven that listening strategy training can effectively improve the listening strategy awareness and listening level of college sports majors.[5]

Sports major students lack English reading habits and have a serious shortage of reading volume. Students have poor foundation, small vocabulary, and reading itself is dull and boring. Physical education students have poor reading ability and it is not difficult to understand. To enhance students' interest in English reading and thus improve the effectiveness of English learning, Hou Ying proposed the learning model of "Happy English Extracurricular Reading". After 3 months of Happy English extracurricular reading training, the experimental class showed a significant improvement in grades compared to the control class. For students majoring in sports with weak foundations, the Happy English extracurricular reading program can effectively improve their English reading scores and enhance their intrinsic motivation for English learning .[8]

Research related to English vocabulary learning has also received attention. The article an Empirical Study on English Vocabulary Teaching of P.E. Majors from the Perspective of the Dual Coding Theory takes physical education majors at Bohai University as the research object, and proposes strategies to promote English vocabulary learning based on the dual code theory. After conducting word ability tests, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and pre - and post experiment data analysis on the control and experimental classes, the study confirmed that teaching guided by the dual code theory can indeed improve the attitude of physical education students towards vocabulary

learning; After being trained in a teaching mode based on the dual code theory, students' memory of words within a given time is better than those who did not receive this method, and the effect on maintaining vocabulary memory is significant. Therefore, it is feasible to apply the English vocabulary teaching model based on the dual code theory to physical education students.[12]

In addition, some studies have suggested that the role of strategy learning far outweighs the learning outcomes themselves. For example, Xiang Lan believes that cultivating students' learning strategies is not only to improve their learning outcomes during their school years, but more importantly, to enable them to acquire independent and self-directed learning abilities, creating conditions for lifelong learning. (Xiang Lan, 2009) [14].

3. Conclusion: Outlook on English Teaching Research for College Physical Education Majors

The English teaching and related research of college sports majors involve multiple aspects of English teaching. From the perspective of teaching effectiveness, the reverse effect of research on teaching is not obvious, and its theoretical significance is more prominent. The role of research results in practical teaching is not significant. The research conducted from the perspective of the subjective initiative of learning subjects to promote the English learning effectiveness of sports majors is also of great practical significance. For example, the study of the relationship between students' learning behavior habits and English learning is also an important research for solving problems. In addition, the research on the six aspects of listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, and vocabulary requirements in the "Teaching Requirements for College English Courses" has not fully covered the research and has certain research significance.

In 2020, the China's Ministry of Education released the *Guidelines for College English Teaching*, which combined with the important concepts of the development of China's universities, added college English courses such as ideological and political education, excellent human culture, and values education to the teaching content. It also added important content such as using modern technology to create high-quality online courses and the "Four Good Teachers" proposed for the construction of teacher ethics and style in college English teaching. The above concepts and proposals with contemporary significance are also new directions for research on professional English teaching in college physical education institutions.

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