

A Study of English Teaching Strategies in Senior High School to Enhance Second Language Learning Motivation from a Self-Efficacy Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in L2 learning, influencing motivation and teaching effectiveness. This thesis explores English teaching strategies in senior high schools to enhance L2 motivation from a self-efficacy perspective. It reviews key theories, research findings, and gaps, proposing strategies such as personalized learning goals, progressive task difficulty, and constructive feedback. By applying these methods, educators can enhance L2 learning outcomes, preparing students for academic and professional success while fostering long-term development.

KEYWORDS

self-efficacy; second language motivation; teaching strategies; senior high school

1 Introduction

Enhancing second language (L2) learners' self-efficacy is crucial for fostering motivation and optimizing teaching strategies in today's globalized world^[1]. Senior high school students, who face significant academic pressure, can particularly benefit from self-efficacy-focused instruction. This thesis explores the role of self-efficacy in stimulating L2 motivation and improving learning outcomes, offering strategic guidance for senior high school teaching practices^[2].

1.1 Background and significance

With globalization, L2 learning is vital for competitiveness and cross-cultural communication. Its success depends on external factors (learning environment, resources) and internal factors (motivation, self-efficacy). Self-efficacy, defined as confidence in one's abilities, plays a key role in motivation and achievement, crucial for senior high school students' success^[3].

While research links L2 motivation and self-efficacy, fewer studies analyze teaching strategies from this perspective, especially for younger learners. This thesis explores self-efficacy-driven strategies to improve English instruction effectiveness in senior high schools.

2 An overview of basic theories

To fully understand second language (L2) motivation and English teaching strategies from a self-efficacy perspective, it is essential to examine the foundational theories that underpin these concepts^[4].

2.1 The Development of Second Language Learning Motivation Theory

L2 motivation theories have evolved significantly. Early research, influenced by structuralism and behaviorism, focused on external factors^[5]. Since the 1950s, attention has shifted toward internal factors, such as learners' attitudes and beliefs. Among the most influential theories are Gardner's Social Education Model, Dörnyei's Three-Dimensional Framework, and his L2 Motivational Self System.

2.1.1 Social Education Model

This model, rooted in social and psychological research, classifies motivation into integrative motivation (desire to integrate into the target language community) and instrumental motivation (practical benefits like career advancement) (Gardner, 1972)^[6].

2.1.2 Three-Dimensional Framework

Dörnyei (1994) proposed a motivation model based on language, learner, and learning context. The learner level relates to self-efficacy, encompassing achievement needs (recognition and status) and self-confidence^[7]. The learning

situation level includes curriculum, teacher influence, and environment as key motivational factors.

2.1.3 L2 Motivational Self System

This system links learner identity with language learning success (Calafato & Tang, 2019:25). It consists of:

Ideal L2 Self – the learner's envisioned future self in the target language.

Ought-to L2 Self – external expectations, such as academic or social pressures^[8].

L2 Learning Experience – past and present learning environments, where successful experiences enhance motivation (Dörnyei, 2005:106).

L2 motivation theories have transitioned from social-psychological models to dynamic, multidimensional frameworks, offering valuable insights for both research and practical teaching strategies^[9].

2.2 Introduction of Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy, a key concept in social learning theory, was introduced by Albert Bandura. It refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete tasks successfully (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013). This belief influences decision-making, perseverance, emotions, and effort (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2003). Research confirms that self-efficacy strongly predicts L2 achievement, shaping motivation, strategy selection, and learning effectiveness in language acquisition^[10].

3 Relevant studies at home and abroad

Extensive research has explored L2 motivation, self-efficacy, and teaching strategies, offering valuable insights^[11]. This literature review builds on existing research to examine teaching strategies in senior high schools that enhance motivation through self-efficacy.

3.1 Research Status abroad

Foreign studies in this field began earlier and have provided a strong theoretical foundation. These studies offer essential insights into L2 motivation, self-efficacy, and teaching strategies, setting a precedent for further exploration and application in second language education^[12].

3.1.1 Research on second language learning motivation

L2 motivation research began in the 1960s, with Gardner & Lambert (1972) proposing the Social-Psychological Model (integrative vs. instrumental motivation). Dörnyei (1994, 2005) expanded this with the Three-Dimensional Model and L2 Motivational Self System, emphasizing identity and motivation^[13]. Studies confirm a strong link between motivation and learning success (Moskovsky et al., 2016; Papi & Khajavy, 2021), offering valuable insights for language education^[14].

3.1.2 Research on second language self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, defined in social cognitive theory, refers to confidence in one's ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977). Studies confirm its positive correlation with L2 proficiency, influencing effort, strategy use, anxiety, and achievement (Mercer, 2011; Ellis, 2013; Woodrow, 2011). Strong self-efficacy fosters motivation, persistence, and learning success^[15].

3.1.3 Research on the relationship between second language motivation and self-efficacy

Self-efficacy and L2 motivation are strongly correlated (Nilsen, 2009). High self-efficacy enhances engagement and persistence. Zimmerman (2000) suggests that goal setting, feedback, and progress monitoring improve self-efficacy, enabling students to overcome challenges and succeed in language learning^[16].

3.1.4 Research on related teaching strategies

International research highlights the role of self-efficacy in motivation and identifies effective teaching strategies across various countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia^[17].

1) Correcting Negative Self-Beliefs Teachers should identify and correct students' negative self-perceptions by providing constructive feedback and emphasizing their strengths, fostering a more positive self-image (Pajares, 2006)^[18].

2) Gradual Task Difficulty Progressively increasing task complexity allows students to experience success, gradually

building their confidence and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

3) Immediate Positive Feedback Timely positive reinforcement helps learners recognize progress, boosting self-confidence and motivation (Talsma et al., 2018).

3.2 Domestic Research Status

Research on L2 motivation and self-efficacy in China began relatively late but has progressed significantly in recent years.

3.2.1 Research on second language learning motivation

Since the 1980s, motivation theories have shaped foreign language education in China, deepening understanding of learning motivation. Studies confirm a strong correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and achievement (Wang Junshu & Wang Shusheng, 2024; Liu, 2024; Chen, 2019). Research also explores goal setting and learner needs (Chen & Shu, 2022), with Guo & Liu (2020) developing a course framework based on three-dimensional motivation theory^[19].

3.2.2 Research on self-efficacy

Domestic studies confirm self-efficacy's role in language proficiency and academic success (Cui & Meng, 2023). Chen (2019) found it reduces anxiety and improves oral engagement. Lou & Li (2018) emphasized positive feedback in boosting confidence^[20]. Scholars propose strategies like success experiences, goal setting, and attribution training (Liu, 2010) to create a supportive learning environment that enhances motivation and proficiency.

3.2.3 Research on the relationship between second language motivation and self-efficacy

Studies highlight a strong correlation between self-efficacy and L2 motivation. Lee & Yu (2008) found links between intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and self-efficacy^[21]. Wang Tianfa et al. (2009) showed that higher self-efficacy boosts motivation and independent learning, further supported by Chen (2019) and Liu (2010).

3.2.4 Research on related teaching strategies

Domestic research has identified effective strategies for enhancing L2 motivation and self-efficacy:

1) Rearranging Text to Boost Confidence Guo & Liu (2020) suggest restructuring English texts into letters, stories, and poems to make learning more engaging and increase achievement motivation^[22].

2) Gradual Task Difficulty Wang (2024) advocates progressive task difficulty, allowing students to experience success, build confidence, and strengthen self-efficacy-driven motivation.

3) Using English in Real-World Contexts Chen & Shu (2022) emphasize teacher-led discussions on topics of interest, helping students expand knowledge and language skills while addressing diverse learning needs^[23].

4) Positive Evaluation and Timely Praise to Boost Self-Confidence

Chen (2019), Lou & Li (2018) emphasized the importance of positive evaluation and timely praise, which enhance students' self-confidence and sense of efficacy, creating a supportive learning environment^[24].

5) Aligning Ideal Self with Achievable Goals

Teachers should help students align their ideal self with realistic goals (Chen, 2019; Wang Junshu & Wang Shusheng, 2024), bridging the gap between aspirations and current abilities to make learning more attainable.

However, research gaps remain. Wu & Zhang (2010) noted a lack of empirical studies on developing self-efficacy, while Li & Liu (2015) highlighted that studies on L2 motivation in China focus mainly on undergraduates, with less attention to younger students.

In conclusion, these strategies enhance SLA motivation and self-efficacy, helping educators build an engaging and supportive environment^[25]. Future research should expand empirical studies and explore different educational levels to refine these strategies.

4 Summary and Comment Based on the Previous Research and Gap-finding

4.1 Summary and Comment on Previous Research

Studies on L2 motivation and self-efficacy highlight their key roles in second language acquisition. Research confirms their strong correlation with L2 achievement and examines practical applications in teaching^[26].

By integrating self-efficacy and motivation theories into classrooms, educators can enhance engagement and success,

fostering supportive learning environments that maximize L2 learners' motivation and confidence.

4.2 Comment and Gap-Finding

While research highlights the importance of motivation and self-efficacy in L2 learning, gaps remain.

Most studies focus on undergraduates, with less attention to primary, junior high, and senior high school students^[27]. However, younger students' developmental stages significantly impact motivation and self-efficacy.

Additionally, there is a lack of systematic approaches analyzing how teaching strategies enhance L2 motivation through self-efficacy. More research is needed to explore effective English teaching strategies that integrate both concepts, helping educators build supportive learning environments.

5 Suggestions for Possible Application in senior high school

5.1 Personalized Learning Goals

At this critical stage, students' career aspirations shape their motivation. Teachers should help set achievable goals aligned with their future plans, bridging the gap between aspirations and abilities^[28]. For instance, in *Working the Land* (Unit 5, Elective Book 1, PEP), students can write essays or prepare presentations about their dreams, reinforcing motivation.

5.2 Engaging and Varied Teaching Materials

Students engage more when materials relate to their interests and future careers. Teachers should incorporate articles, news, and literature relevant to their lives. In *Natural Disasters* (Unit 4, Compulsory Book 1, PEP), using news articles, videos, and interactive activities makes learning more engaging and meaningful.

5.3 Gradual Task Difficulty

Building confidence through progressive challenges is key to students' academic and personal growth. Tasks should start at comfortable levels and gradually increase in difficulty, allowing students to accumulate success experiences and strengthen self-efficacy. For complex language tasks, scaffolding can support students in mastering challenges.

5.4 Positive Feedback and Encouragement

Timely positive reinforcement boosts motivation and confidence. Teachers should provide specific, constructive feedback on assignments, recognizing strengths and areas for improvement. For example, praise effective introductions while suggesting supporting examples or statistics for stronger arguments.

5.5 Real-World Applications

Connecting learning to practical contexts enhances motivation. Discussing global issues, technology, or career opportunities makes English more relevant. For instance, in *Environmental Protection* (Unit 3, Elective Book 3, PEP), students can debate renewable energy to develop language and critical thinking skills.

5.6 Collaborative Learning

Group activities foster community and support, enhancing self-efficacy. In *The Internet* (Unit 3, Compulsory Book 2, PEP), students can collaborate on multimedia presentations about social media's impact on communication.

6 Conclusion

This thesis highlights the crucial role of self-efficacy in enhancing L2 motivation among senior high school students. Research underscores the need for a supportive and engaging learning environment. Effective strategies include personalized learning goals, gradual task difficulty, constructive feedback, real-world applications, and collaborative learning. These methods boost confidence, motivation, and engagement, leading to better L2 learning outcomes.

By applying these evidence-based strategies, educators can enhance academic performance and prepare students for future success in a globalized world.

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