

ANALYSIS OF THE FEELING OF FRUSTRATION EXPERIENCED BY CHINESE
MIDDLE SCHOOL ESL STUDENTS—FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PSYCHOLOGY

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**Analysis of the Feeling of Frustration Experienced by Chinese Middle
School ESL Students—From the Perspective of Psychology**

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Abstract

With the rapid development of globalization and the arrival of the age of knowledge, English learning has become ever more important. On the international stage, communication plays a crucial role in the exchange of business and cultural matters, as the language of this exchange is increasingly English. Therefore, foreign language teaching in general is pivotal for promoting international communication and global relationship building, and English in particular, as it is widely used in international communication. It follows that people all over the world have been starting to learn English from an early age already; this trend holds also true for China. However, it seems, that during the middle school years, the majority of students are lacking the EFL experience needed to succeed; the result is that they will inevitably experience frustration as they are expected to acquire English proficiency. This frustration may be exasperated by non-existing confidence or ineffective learning methods etc. I propose, that for these reasons the teachers must find out the root causes of the problem and try to find solutions to help the students.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

With the development of society, people are now living in a world full of new challenges. In order to keep up with the high speed of development, learning English has become a very important part of every student's life. To attend a good college, a high degree of English proficiency is necessary; in order to obtain a good job after graduation, speaking English well is a must; for a successful career knowing English is essential. Now even younger children are facing the pressure from their parents and teachers to do well and middle school is a critical stage for students. It is a very important period for students to capture their interest in learning and to buoy their confidence. It is also the basic stage to strengthen the foundation for their high school learning. However, in accord with the impact of their social environment, the competition between classmates is also increasing in middle school. What's worse, due to the fierce competition and various pressures, the students are facing frustration and difficulties in their acquisition of English. This situation also has a detrimental effect on students personally. The ultimate purpose of education is to foster strong pillars of society. For the students themselves, education can help achieve a life according to their values. However, many schools deviate from the norms of quality education, including EFL. The goal of simply producing high graduation rates places most of the students into the awkward situation that they are facing great pressure from school and from their family to get high scores in their exams. One little discussed aspect is that most children are very sheltered and unaccustomed to stringent work thanks to China's one-child policy. They are not prepared to bear frustration and pressures stemming both from life and learning.

In general, most students are capable of learning all subjects equally. But some students may prefer to learn Mathematics or Chemistry to English, so that they are far behind other students in English exams, a fact, which makes them feel frustrated. Take my class for example; there are some students who have no idea of how to handle academic problems when they encounter them. Especially when learning English, they are suffering frustration without any perceivable

solution. During the three years of their middle school learning, due to this frustration, they will present with symptoms of depression, mental fragility, self-abasing personality traits (low self-esteem), etc. If these issues can't be solved quickly, this may have a seriously detrimental effect on the development of their body and mind. Teachers play a critical role in their students' lives; a teacher can be a leader, a guide, and a partner to them. In other words, teachers ought not only to pay attention to how to teach knowledge, but also teach learn skills, model attitude toward learning, and guide their students to achieve their live values. During their study of English, some students have already met with failures and frustrations, which reduce their courage and interest in learning. These frustrations can be presented as follows.

Students are under great psychological pressure. This makes students feel lost when facing success or failure. The pressure to enter a higher school, a process in in which process scores are the most important determinant as a measure of a student, causes some students great psychological pressure from school and home. Furthermore, the focus on scores will lead to a lack of confidence in learning English, and helplessness when facing a setback. With the deepening of English acquisition, of vocabulary development, reading, listening and so on, students will encounter learning difficulties and failures more often, and lose confidence in English learning with deepening frustration. Facing problems to which they cannot find a solution will also influence the non-academic parts of their life. This is common phenomenon experienced by junior middle school students when learning English (Zhao, 1994).

Another source of frustration is the students' poor comprehensive ability of applying the target language. English is a tool for communication; but many students learned not to use it as such. This causes their spoken English to be very poor. They fail to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice, let alone develop their speaking abilities. If these problems cannot be solved in a timely and sequential manner, students with face cascading learning obstacles, generating frustration, which finally leads to losing interest in learning English learning (Chen, 2002).

Because of the above reasons, I focus on looking for solutions for their frustration in learning English; I work on preparing students to be ready psychologically for learning English, even when they encounter frustrations and to be equipped with resistance to frustration.

1.2 Research Significance

Modern society is a society full of competition and challenges, but also of opportunities. To prepare each student for such a society, individual student development is the core concept of the new curricular standard. The educational principles are to enable each and every student to be physically healthy, have a sound and resilient personality, and lead them to a greater ability to deal with the frustrations encountered in the educational process. Teachers are called up to cultivate students' individual abilities and strengthen their skills for effective learning and their never-give-up spirit. In life, everyone will encounter setbacks. Moderate setbacks have certain positive functions, which can help people overcome inertia and prompt them to move forward. Similarly, a setback in learning is also a challenge and a test.

In education, therefore, enhancing teenagers' psychological resilience and adaptability has become the top priority. Since middle school students tend to have a low ability to cope with setbacks, it is necessary to extend the curriculum to include education to help students deal with frustration, to improve the students' ideological education, to enhance students' confidence and perseverance to overcome difficulties; with other words, education needs to enhance students' physical and mental health to tackle setback. A curriculum enhanced in such a manner can also stimulate each student's potential and cultivate his or her good will. Education toward dealing with frustration can help students enjoy the joy of success. It also can guide students to complete their socialization process and thus lay a foundation for success. In this paper I will refer to the principles of such an education "frustration education."

A second point is the practical significance of an enhanced curriculum. Through integrating attention to the frustration middle school students experience during their education, it is possible to improve the physical and mental growth and sustainable development of the students. One related positive result is that students' confidence in learning English will also be increased (Cheng, 1997).

1.3 Research questions

1. What kinds of frustration have middle school students encountered?
2. Why do they encounter these frustrations?

3. What are solutions to solve these frustrations?

2. Literature Review

Every person will meet all kinds of frustrations during his or her whole life. These frustrations may arise within the family or school or society. But if these frustrations are treated as opportunities personal growth, they can be seen and experienced as helpful. These frustrations can also be seen as challenges or tests. There is a proverb that says that qualities beyond nature always come from the frustrations people overcome. Even today's life frustrations can be understood as significant, worthwhile lessons we should take seriously.

Quality-oriented education is aimed to develop various facets of a student's character. To reach this goal teachers need to know their students. It is important, then, to notice the physical change and development of the students and to pay attention to their attitude towards frustration. Through observing students' words, their behavior, expressions and so on, teachers should be able to fathom the inner life of their students. They can also visit the family or monitor a diary to perceive and understand changes in a student. When a teacher discovers that a student is experiencing frustration, the focus should be on encouraging this student to keep a positive attitude while at the same time tackling difficulties, and overcome them instead of avoiding them. Never treat children as grow-ups; they may experience even more sensitive feelings than adults. Sometimes, a change in the family, a joke from classmates or even some mundane occasions may cause their frustration, pain and a resistance to communicate. Therefore, teachers should play a guiding role in each student's life and pay attention to their feelings (Newport, 1990).

According to a survey from August 1992, concerning a summer expedition to the prairie of Inner Mongolia, the tolerance for hardship and persistence of participating Chinese students was far less than the tolerance of Japanese students. These findings received national attention and are partially the reason that frustration education entered people's minds and the knowledge that it could cultivate children's ability to deal with hardship and setbacks in a positive way. Scholars also looked for and analyzed the causes of frustration and relationship to student

performance, educational principles of “frustration education”, and assessment measurements. Enhancing resistance to frustration has become the core of 1990’s quality-oriented education. Meanwhile, it also became the focus in research and society. It is a tough and long task in education.

2.1 Identification of Language Learning Frustration

2.1.1 Frustration as psychological concept

In psychology, frustration refers to the attitude response generated when an individual engaged in purposeful activities meets with an obstacles or interference, which leads to the failure of the activity; the person’s goal cannot be achieved and requirements cannot be met. Frustration includes three aspects: One is the frustration situation, namely the situation, which causes interference and obstacles during on purpose activities. What stimulates the situation may be people or subjects or even the natural or social environment. The second is the frustration recognition. It is the recognition, awareness and evaluation when one is in the frustrating situation. The last one is the frustration reaction, which means the anxiety, confusion, anger and other negative attitudes generated under frustrating situation, namely frustration (The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010).

In the Modern Chinese Dictionary (revised edition), frustration is interpreted as ‘failure and defeat’. For example, a student with an outstanding academic record, and good performance as well as a diligent, positive attitude, is ready to take the national college examination to pursue his or her university dream. But, just before the exam, the student is hospitalized because of a serious illness, and cannot take the exam. In such a situation a student would feel deep frustration and disappointment, from which it is not easy to recover soon.

Otto Friedrich Bollnow, a German education anthropologist, put forward the term of non-continuity education and the frustration concept. He regarded frustration as coming from human survival in nature. He believes that survival is an essential part of human life experience, that it is inevitable. The key is the attitude toward frustration. If educators can have a full understanding of this human survival tactic and consciously cultivate dealing with crisis in the

process of education, students will benefit from education to effectively cope with frustration. Bollnow's theory is encapsulated in the concept of non-continuity education mode. Previous education theories maintain that education is a consistent progression; they do not consider the interference factors emerging in the process of education. However, the continuity education holds that education is not a smooth road and that there will be interference factors, pushing against the nature of human existence. The resulting crisis is inevitable. This idea is the key as to the transfer of crisis toward a favorable direction. In fact, what Bollow called the non-continuity education covers more than the content of frustration education. Frustration education is demonstration and application in the process of non-continuity education. It belongs to the part of crisis education (Krashen, Long and Scarcella, 1979).

Frustration, as an abstract thing, has two sides; it is both advantageous and disadvantageous. Frustration can make a person feel disappointed, helpless, and some students react by showing a negative attitude and further lose of confidence, and, finally, they will give up learning English with the above mentioned consequences. However, those students who have experienced frustration can draw experiences and lessons from failure, and can become more mature and strong in the process. They will grow up with adversity while overcoming the adversity. Domestic scholars think that with the increasing depth of English acquisition, students may face increasing difficult contents and knowledge, which will frustrate them and cause their scores to decrease (Oyama, 1976). Thus, they lose confidence and interest which results in a negative attitude. This is frustration in learning English.

2.1.2 Language learning frustration

For many students, learning a language is a new and interesting thing at the very beginning. With the increasing difficulty of materials, their learning may suffer difficulties, which will lead to the frustration in language learning. In connection with his concept of emotional filter assumption, Krashen (1985) mentions that in the second language learning process, learners many not absorb what they hear. The frustration, motivation, and/or confidence related to the emotional filtering may impact their learning speed and quality. Students in junior middle school are the ones who meet many difficulties in language learning during which they may

encounter happiness and frustration and language learning frustration is the common learning frustration, but it is different from other learning frustration (Zhao, 2006). The frustration in language learning means during the process of learning, students may encounter the emotional reactions coming from the society, school and family (Yang, 2010). If there is no proper handling method, students may generate fears in others. This attitude will further impact on students learning interest.

2.2 Frustration with speaking English

Another common problem in learning English in junior high school is that students are nervous to speak the English language out loud. This is because the junior high school English education is just a beginning. Students are not confident to use the new vocabulary, let alone utter whole sentences. Also, the Chinese education method is teacher oriented so that students are more likely to listen to their teachers instead of practicing on their own. They lack the experience to perform in front of their classmates. Some of the students who work hard with a good score in English examinations cannot express themselves orally in English, even some basic introduction. The interviewees suggest that the reason why they are afraid of speaking in front of classmates is that they are afraid of making mistakes. If they make mistakes or cannot perform well, classmates will also doubt their performance in exams and other educational activities. Also, teachers may then have a different opinion about them. In particular, some teachers may criticize them by saying that they haven't prepared or are incapable of learning. This block will stop the continuation of learning English and, in turn, will further reduce any positive attitude toward learning. In addition, many students who have a good grade happen to be introverts, which hinders them from expressing themselves in front of others. Some of the students suggest that they are afraid of talking with teachers in the first place, so that they don't know how to handle negative comments made by the teachers. They are unwilling to say, then afraid of saying. This passive learning, too, is liable lead to the loss of interest in learning English and generate frustration.

2.2.1 Self-confidence and frustration

It is reasonable that self-confidence is closely related to frustration. Confidence is a problem in learning English, especially in China, where teachers are playing a key role in the class. As the core of the class, their emotion, attitude will both influence the students' learning frustration. For instance, there are no encouragements, no comments. "Teachers and students are equal, let the students become the study master, and cannot see them as simple cognitive body". (Jiao, 1994, p. 27) To cultivate and develop their interests can make students be in a good mood and make them full of spirit and cultivate a strong learning motivation. Because of their early age and lack of experience, the purpose should be to strengthen the education of English, but also to lead the students in the process of using English to enhance learning interest and let them experience enjoyment in the use of English, such as daily reports, writing a dialogue, English games, drama and theatrical performance, authentic practice texts. Every time they use the English language, every opening, or conscious imitation of pronunciation should be accompanied with sincere expressions of praise and encouragement to students to find their strength. This is the effective way to create the possibilities for success and to let them taste the joy of success, which enhances their self-confidence.

2.2.2 Learning Interest and Frustration

Most difficulties in learning English will lead to frustration. However, many of the difficulties are related to loss of learning interest. More importantly, long time interest loss will make the students give up on learning entirely. This is a vicious circle. Therefore, when tackling the frustration of learning English, the methods to awakening students' interest in learning should also be considered.

3. Research Method

We did a series of semi-structured face-to-face interviews to explore frustration from the psychological perspective about (i) the reason for getting the frustration; (ii) the root cause of the problem; and (iii) the solutions to the problem. We defined the students in middle school in

China as the interviewees. We sought information about the students who have attained a basic knowledge of English.

Interview place: randomly on campus at a Chinese junior middle school

Duration: controlled up to 1.5 hours (to let the interviewees complete their story)

Preparation: in total 40 interviewees, 5 determined questions and 4 open questions.

Interview questionnaire:

Introductory questions:

Sex

Date of birth

Age

Years of learning English

Level of English in class

Determined questions:

1. Do you like English: Y/N

2. Which part of English learning is the most difficult?

Listening, speaking, reading, writing

3. Do you like your English teacher? Y/N

4. Do you think your English learning is good in class? Y/N

5. Do you think the support from teachers and parents are enough? Y/N

Open questions:

6. Why do you think question 2's part is the most difficult one? Please to be specific.

7. What is the problem of your teacher which led to the frustration of your English learning?

8. What do you expect to gain from both your parents and teacher?

9. How do you learn English?

4. Analysis of Data

4.1 Profile of Informants

(1) Long memorizing time for vocabulary and high forgetting rate

In the interview, the most frequent difficulties mentioned by the interviewees are difficulties memorizing vocabulary. Students in junior high school, compared with primary school, are obviously presented with increasing number of vocabulary items. Many students understand the meaning of the words but they cannot read them. Because of curricular time constraints the teacher rarely gives students the opportunity for spoken practice reading when learning vocabulary. In addition, when students come back home after class, they are busy with writing assignments and here, too, there is no time to consciously listen and read and speak the vocabulary. Some students with a low score in vocabulary have more burdens in memorizing vocabulary. In the interview many students state, that they don't like memorizing vocabulary, which leads to poor vocabulary recall. They also state that they have difficulties in spelling. While losing interest in memorizing, more lexicon items will be presented and required with the new educational materials. It is a vicious cycle. With the growing lack of ever more difficult vocabulary items, students are facing difficulties in understanding whole sentence, passage and so on. This exacerbates loss of interest in learning English and generates the sense of frustration. Students become afraid of learning English (Snow & Hoefnagel-Hoehle, 1978). Without confidence, it becomes ever more difficult to catch up with the others. Some students don't know how to consolidate the already memorized vocabularies; therefore, it is easy for them to forget the vocabularies. There is a forgetting curve, which shows the memory trend of students. If there is no consolidating memory process, students also forget the vocabulary items they already remembered. Only by repetitively re-enforcing what already has been memorized, vocabulary can be stored in the memory functions of the brain.

In fact, there are many ways to remember words, such as the repeat memory method, the rule

based mnemonic system, the associative memory method, the classification mnemonic system, the comparison mnemonic system, the word-formation memory method and so on. However, no matter which method one selects, both memorizing and forgetting should be considered.

(2) It's easy to mimic sentence structures, difficult to apply

The goal of the English curriculum in junior high school is to prepare students to master the basic skills needed for a comprehensive ability to use English. The teaching material in junior high school students includes increasingly complex characteristic phrases and complicated sentence patterns. Some students can memorize mechanically what teacher teaches about phrases and sentences. They show a strong dependence on the teacher to learn the contents. However, they don't have an understanding of a more theoretical, systemic idea and are not flexible in using and analyzing a given concept, let alone their derivations. They do not pay attention to the practical application of language, thus, the students lose the key to learn English. Actually, English is learnt through listening, speaking, reading and writing practice. To only copy the patterns taught by the teacher can only produce limited progress. English is a subject based on knowledge, understanding, ability and continuous training. If one only grasps one specific form of a language instead of familiarizing oneself with its structure and application, students will forget it easily; even after a period of hard work, they still cannot bring the performance expected. Many students are thus facing failure and setbacks with bad scores in the exams. Once again, the point needs to be made, students doubt their own English learning ability, and gradually lose confidence to overcome these difficulties. This will further produce low self-esteem and a feeling of inferiority to others, and dare not present and speak English in front of classmates. It will choke the development of a student's potential development and creativity. In short, it causes a student's frustration in learning English with the result that they can write but cannot communicate orally with others (Gorosch, 1964).

Students can do well on cloze tests and reciting passages in fill in the blank test parts. However, when being asked to use the phrases and sentences in free conversations, they can hardly speak them. This lack of the ability to apply what has been learned will also lead to learning frustration.

(3) No systematic learning in basic knowledge, lack of understanding and integration

This is common in Chinese class. Many interviewees admit that they are left with questions when the class is over. However, they never try to ask the teachers in class. Some may go to the office to ask the teachers. However, the teachers are frustrated with this kind of questioning since they already ask in class whether students have any questions. Although the teachers still answer questions in their office, their attitude is not welcoming. Therefore, students may be reluctant to asking again. Other students wait with their questions until the exam. It is ironic that compared the western students, Chinese students come to class with no questions, and leave class with many questions. In general, western students come to class with many questions while leaving with no questions. It is reasonable to say, that in a Chinese classroom, students are led by teachers only and only know how to follow the teachers. They lack the ability to digest the knowledge and use the knowledge comprehensively. The result is that students are not able to apply the presented knowledge in diverging situations. Instead, they can only understand the information within the class context. This general statement holds true also for learning English; what students learn is separate. Although they can handle the exams well, they don't know how to make the separate knowledge into a systematic one to apply them in their daily life. In many educational English materials information is presented in a repetitive way, such as how to ask for the way, conversation at the doctor's, and vocabulary and so on. However, students can only remember how material was presented in each chapter of their textbook, and cannot combine this information to apply to a life situation. This is certainly caused by their learning method, which lacks flexibility and offers no way to summarize and incorporate new material into already existing knowledge. Time-consuming learning method make students feel exhausted and fed up with English learning which finally turns into frustration (Rogoff, 1990).

(4) Poor reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is an important part of the English curriculum in junior high

school. Sadly, for many students this is their nightmare. Reading an English text requires students to learn specific reading techniques, with attention paid to grasping vocabulary, phrases, sentence structures, and lexical applications and so on. Together this will test overall comprehension of the English language. But due to limited vocabulary and poor reading methods, students may encounter difficulties in reading comprehension. From the interview, many students think highly of the value of reading comprehension by saying if they can grasp the method to understand the passage, it means they already grasp the vocabulary, phrases, sentence and application. As stated, there are many reasons for their lack of reading comprehension ability. For example, the lack of accumulation in vocabulary and phrases, don't know the idiomatic usage, no reading method, and so on. These together will make the difficulties in reading. In addition, some students don't like practice reading; they think it is a waste of time. They believe if they can handle the basics such as vocabulary, phrases, sentence and application, then they can read the passage smoothly without difficulty. Therefore, every time, when they do a whole paper practice, they will skip reading the reading comprehension part. Therefore, they will not get a good score in reading comprehension in exams, which will lead to their frustration in learning.

(5) Poor listening comprehension

Some of the interviewees always feel passive, are uncertain, too nervous; therefore, when listening, they pay too much attention to every sound, every word and every detail, which makes them unable to understand a foreign language, or even their first language. This is because their attention is not on content but only on distinct parts of language, such as the phonemes, so that they notice details, but do not understand the general meaning of a text. This phenomenon becomes even more complex as these students focus only on what they are hearing, but do not integrate this into what they have already heard. The proportion of listening comprehension of the current English exam for junior middle school is 25 points out of 100. Listening ability is slowly accumulated during daily learning. But most of the students pay attention to the scores of the writing test, and allow for little time to practice listening, which can only be exercised in the classroom with the teaching material. In order to complete the teaching task, teachers assign listening exercises to improve listening ability. However, the importance of accumulation in

every day life, for example, watching English movies, TV programs, listening to English songs, reading English magazine and other sources is not incorporated. Students often do not have a chance to experience English outside the classroom. This leads to test results of good enough vocabulary, a very strong written part, and a poor oral performance. The listening comprehension is based on the context of the English text. Only learning to write English without speaking English will lead to poor listening. Those students who don't like to speak in class have poorer scores in listening than those students who speak frequently. This phenomenon leads to the loss of score in listening, which will further cause frustration in students.

(6) Language thinking ability is weak, lack of comprehensive skills

English tests the comprehensive ability to use language. Some students have not developed good study habits in junior high school. For example, students remember words on the spelling level, letter after letter, which they also read this way, breaking each word into pieces. Students don't follow the rules of pronunciation and they don't know to understand the word as they appear organically in sentence and text. As a result, they will soon forget these words. Students need to learn how to combine what is presented in their textbook with what they can use in daily life. In today's information age and highly open market, students who can write, and answer a question can adapt to the requirement of societal development. As humans we listen, speak, read, and write; we need to be able to do all of this in English. English is a practical skill. For example, some students have bought a 'disk man', but they cannot understand the English specification, and now they are unable to use this device. They bought medicine, but cannot understand the instructions, and failed to take the correct dosage. The students must have a lot of practice activities and learn to think and communicate in English expression. If possible, pretend talking to foreigners when practicing. If students isolate English from their real environment, they will fail learning it well.

(7) Too much attention to grammar, ignoring other project training

In China, English education starts with grammar. For example, there is emphasis on teaching content, detail explanation, writing practice, grammar analysis and rules, while skills delivery,

repetitive practices, speaking, application of grammar, and case study are ignored. Students noticed, that they need to dedicate much of their time remembering the grammar rules and they have no time to practice. There are too many word forms, parts of sentence, lexical change, sentence structure, and articles, prepositions and conjunctions and frustration sets in. If the teacher cannot handle this attitude skillfully, this frustration will further undermine students' confidence and a decrease of their English score is inevitable.

In the interview, the last part is a data collection question in which students are required to fill in which part of learning English is most frustrating for them.

It is obvious from the answers that the above mentioned parts play an almost equal part in the frustration the students experience. Therefore, teachers cannot afford to ignore the difficulties students face listening, speaking, reading, and writing English. We need to look for the root cause and find solutions for their frustration.

4.2 Results Analysis

There must be some root causes for the frustration students experience when learning English. Let me now discuss some psychological reasons and the negative effects they caused.

The main causes effecting English learning can be roughly divided into two categories, intelligence and other factors. These factors are the primary principle of which an English teacher should be aware. Let us set aside the intelligence and discuss the non-intelligence factors that caused the learning frustration, especially the forming of learning mechanism in terms of psychology.

4.2.1 Lack of execution

When learning English students have to change the thinking and speaking habits formed when they acquired their native language. The way of thinking in English is quite different from thinking in Chinese. Students essentially have to develop a new thinking mode during the English learning process. Until that happens Chinglish, rather than English, will be the result and students may feel quite uncomfortable to correct their Chinglish. The construction of the English thinking mode requires much repetitive practices; students have to bare what can seem

a dull, even boring, and arduous learning process, which may last for a long time. This is the time when frustration becomes apparent. Students may feel conflicted between the two thinking modes, Chinese and English. What is worse, some students may become anxious and lose their confidence during that long period of practice. When they encounter difficulties and frustrations, they try their best to find a shortcut to learning English well. They even focus on the successful experiences of others. However, to their disappointment, they, too, were not able to achieve great progress without extraordinary efforts. They have realized the key point to learn English well. Only few of them learned to learn English with the correct methods. So most middle school students are lacking execution; a common phenomenon is that some students try to get advice from their teachers but do not follow through.

4.2.2 Lack of motivation

Atkinson (1963) proposed that learning motivation = learning target expectation value * possibility of accomplish the target. In this formula, the possibility of accomplish the target is your subject opinion, which can be equal to confidence. In the English learning process, students are unavoidable to encounter difficulties which being accumulated will lead to the increase of frustration. Consequently, their confidence will decrease, which, in turn, generates more frustration and motivation will decrease. Students may also have their too high expectation set too high, which decreases the possibility for them to feel accomplished about their actual performance. However, students didn't notice or understand this issue. They don't know that the difficulties come from their unrealistic expectation. They stress learning only on the surface and misunderstand that they cannot learn English that way.

4.2.3 Passive learning attitude

When students enter into middle school from primary school, they regard it as a new opportunity to restart their learning in some subjects. So at first they have a great passion for learning English. However, as the material is getting more and more difficult, the sentences are becoming longer and longer and the lexicon is becoming increasingly variant this attitude changes. What's worse, some students have a weak foundation for English learning. They may

perceive memorizing vocabulary as a heavy burden; this seems to hold especially true for boys. It is a very common phenomenon that a large number of boys have a poor English score in their exams. As time is passing, many students lose their interest in English. The frustration experienced in learning English forces many of them to give up. Meanwhile, the teachers pay less attention to those students due to their poor exam score. An unfortunate consequence of this psychological constellation is, that these students develop a passive attitude toward learning English and finally, are unwilling to learn English at all.

4.2.4 Deviation from correct learning methods

Another reason are the ineffective, unscientific learning methods, which are formed at the beginning of the process of English acquisition. At the very beginning, students tend to only use simple memorization of words; they may also focus much on writing instead of oral practice. This learning method may be effective to assure a high score at first and therefore be perceived as a very effective way to learn English. However, the content of the presented materials will become ever more complex. Simple vocabulary memorization will become woefully inadequate when studying the structure of the English language, application skills, intercultural communication and so on. This is the point in ESL acquisition, when the students need to adjust their learning methods. If students do not understand that they are no longer English novices and that the level of English is now becoming increasingly complex they may lose their interest in learning English.

4.3 Solutions

There are a variety of factors that cause students frustration in the process of learning English. I have discussed four main causes and analyzed the related negative effects. Based on my analysis, I concluded with several solutions to address the problem of frustration and the students' inability to deal with it in a positive way.

4.3.1 The student-centered teaching mode

It is the student that a scientific teaching method shall care about most. In traditional teaching

mode, the teacher usually plays the role as an imparter. Mainly a teacher is talking in the classroom and lecturing to the class. However, not all students can focus on this type of teaching. Especially in China teaching efficiency is usually unsatisfactory. One solution to this problem is to move away from teacher-centered classrooms to a student-centered classroom, with other words to invert the classroom. More opportunities should be given to students, such as let them discuss with classmates first in order to share experiences and increase their vocabularies (Wong,1984). In addition, classroom exercises should be set up gradually; they should be built-up from the word level, to sentence, to dialogue, or passage level. All students, whether they like to talk out loud or not, should be encouraged to talk.

The relationship between teachers and students needs also to be changed. Some students are afraid of teachers instead of perceiving them as well meaning councilors and mentors. Teachers shall regard themselves as mentors, even friends, who learning with their students not as demanders or critics. This seems particularly important when it comes to students' pronunciation and intonation. Teachers need to admit to their students, that the pronunciation of the English language is a very difficult part in learning English and, it might be added, in teaching it. So if a student is reading with incorrect pronunciation, his or her teacher should be encouraging of the effort and correct only gently and with instructive criticism. Keeping and shoring up the confidence of students is the most important thing in the language learning classroom. A practical example for pronunciation practice is: the teachers can lead students in a daily morning reading, patiently correcting their pronunciation face to face. An related aside, students should not only record the assignment, but also share English language resources with their classmates (Genesee,1987).

4.3.2 Enrich the teaching contents

Imaginatively presented, rich, interesting and current teaching contents will peak student interest. It will lead to curiosity and arouse their interest in English learning. Teachers should design different teaching contents corresponding to students' need and interests and the type of lessons. This can optimize teaching methods and maximally arouse students' enthusiasm to learn. It can also help to initiate innovative thinking in students and thus achieve the best

possible outcomes of effective teaching methods. Imaginatively presented, rich, interesting and current material also can be used to develop reading lessons.

Another important point is to cultivate individual students' ability. In the United States, students are required to read entire books from the primary grades on. As students get older, they are required to read an increasing number of books. The books students read need to be shared in class, with what is called 'book reports'. Thus, the comprehensive ability is increased gradually from early on. However, in China, we don't have enough reading materials. Also, the materials are not the practical ones. Teachers, because of the score-oriented evaluation, ignore the importance of reading. If English classes could begin with a drama performance based on the books they read, students could feel attracted by the English content and this could exert more attention during the class. Another method is to develop a dialogue, which can spark students' attention on the following content.

4.3.3 Comparing western and Chinese culture

Most of the students who are not interested in English learning are because of the difficulties to understand the meaning of the language. However, it is noticeable that many meanings are hidden in the culture behind the language. For example, English is oriented in Europe where contains diverse cultures and histories. Many of the English words are related to these cultures, such as Christian. Therefore, teachers should connect the language to the cultures. And teachers can give some examples to compare the different in western and Chinese cultural. The methods are like using pictures, videos, dialogues to make students understand the contents of the language. This method also can benefit students to keep the memory long. Other examples can also be taken, such as table culture, communication culture, customs and habits.

4.3.4 Adjust teaching methods based on individuals

'There are no two identical leaves in the world.' Also, there are no two people alike in the world. Each student's cognitive structure, learning style, types and levels of knowledge, etc. are unique. Individual teaching is adapted to students' individual difference; it develops the

student's individuality, its essence is according to each student's aptitude. The essence of which is based on the characteristics of students' physical and mental development, conducive to the development of students, teaching methods of teaching adapt to the characteristics of students, its core is to let every student get all-round development of personality, do not make any of the students at a disadvantage in the teaching. Thus, in junior middle school English classroom teaching, teachers should consider the individual differences of students (Ramirez, 1991). Vice versa, students should adapt to different teaching content requirements, the processing of in depth to separate different levels, the strategies to solve the problem. Students are encouraged to use different ways to answer the questions. The evaluation standard should have openness with individual teaching implementation in the true sense of education equality of opportunity.

4.3.5 Extend variety teaching measures

Teaching only through book reading can never satisfy students' interest. Therefore, a variety of authentic text sources and types should be considered to arouse their attention. One obvious source for a plethora of textual variants is the Internet. For example, teachers can use the Internet to find English language movies, songs, and other spoken language samples. Movies are always a good choice since students like to watch them. In the movies common words and phrases are repeated, which will give students the needed practice to retain them. Besides, with the content of the movie, students may better understand the meaning of the words and cultural information might also be presented. Besides, multimedia teaching also involves other methods, such as plays, games, presentations and so on. A last effective teaching method I would like to mention is bringing students to museums, theaters or parks to let them experience the application of English.

5. Discussion

Frustration is a common phenomenon in learning English in middle school in China. During the middle school period, the fluctuation of emotions is the biggest one in a student's school experience, so that many students will encounter frustration both in learning and life. Thus, it is important to understand the problem and figure out its root cause. If students are offered good

assistance in tackling their frustration, it is possible for them to work through their problems and keep on learning. It is reasonable to explore this phenomenon from a psychological perspective, such as their confidence.

5.1 Discussion

A solution to the problem of frustration has to address both students' efforts and teaching methods. Teaching methods in China need to be changed from teacher oriented to student-oriented classrooms. Besides, how to build up students' confidence should be considered, such as involvement of students in the class activities, the praise students receive from their teachers and so on. Teaching methods should be broadened to involve activities for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Chinese students almost entirely focus on English writing skills, a fact which has jeopardized English oral skills. This will be the main part of a future study. Furthermore, the mechanical memorizing method is a big problem for Chinese students when learning English. More effective methods need to be developed and implemented. To adopt an effective method will be the next step.

5.2 Limitations

This thesis explores English learning frustration from a psychological perspective. However, the method used is a semi-structured interview, which has the limitation of not being comprehensive. Also, it was an interview with a limited number of people. Thus, the conclusion is not a universal finding towards English learning frustration.

5.3 Recommendations

Further research needs to be conducted. This future research could entail the following aspects.

1. A quantitative research on the data of people who suffering frustration in English learning;
2. A case study on the frustration;

3. Conduct research from both psychological and physical perspectives.

6. Conclusion

Nowadays English learning is important to students in middle school during which the students are laying solid foundation. However, the frustration from the learning keeps confusing the students and hinders the students from learning. Sound research and effective solutions to solve the problem are the first tasks in which both teachers and students need to engage.

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