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Article

Research on the Pathways to Stimulate College Students' Foreign Language Learning Motivation under the Synergistic Development of Higher Education and the Language Industry

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Abstract: With the increasing integration of higher education and the rapidly evolving language industry, the cultivation of application-oriented foreign language talents has become an urgent societal and economic demand. Learning motivation, recognized as one of the most decisive psychological factors influencing learners' academic persistence, cognitive engagement, and overall performance, directly determines the ultimate effectiveness and sustainability of foreign language education. Despite its importance, many contemporary college students exhibit fluctuating or declining motivation levels, necessitating a comprehensive investigation into the underlying causes. Based on the foundational frameworks of self-determination theory, expectancy-value theory, and the emerging concept of synergistic development, this paper systematically analyses the current situation, intrinsic barriers, and extrinsic challenges characterizing college students' foreign language learning motivation. Furthermore, it explores effective, multidimensional stimulation mechanisms facilitated by the joint participation and strategic alignment of higher education institutions and enterprise stakeholders within the language industry. To address the identified motivational deficits, the study proposes a series of actionable pathways. These include strengthening macro-level policy guidance to align educational outcomes with industry needs, innovating traditional curriculum models to incorporate industry-relevant competencies, constructing multimodal and technologically advanced practice platforms for immersive learning, and actively shaping students' professional identity and career foresight. Ultimately, this research aims to provide robust theoretical frameworks and highly practical insights for educators and policymakers, thereby enhancing students' sustainable learning motivation and ensuring their successful transition into the competitive global workforce in the new era.

Keywords: higher education; language industry; learning motivation; synergistic development; educational pathways

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Significance

The rapid expansion of the language industry, driven by globalisation, encompasses diverse fields such as translation, localisation, language services, international communication, and language technology. This growth underscores the increasing demand for foreign language professionals who possess not only linguistic expertise but also strong cross-cultural communication abilities [1, 2]. Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in preparing such professionals; however, traditional classroom-based teaching methods often fail to align with the dynamic and evolving requirements of the

industry. Addressing this gap involves exploring innovative approaches to enhance and sustain college students' motivation for learning. By fostering a closer synergy between higher education and the language industry, institutions can better respond to market demands and refine talent cultivation models, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in a competitive, globalised environment.

1.2. Literature Review and Research Gaps

Research on foreign language learning motivation has predominantly concentrated on psychological frameworks and the unique characteristics of individual learners [3]. However, there has been relatively little exploration of how external factors, such as the integration of industry and education, influence motivational dynamics. Foundational theories like self-determination theory and expectancy-value theory offer robust tools for understanding motivation, yet there remains a lack of comprehensive studies that investigate how higher education institutions and the language industry can collaboratively create supportive ecosystems to enhance motivation. This highlights a significant gap in connecting theoretical insights with the practical demands of fostering synergistic development in this field.

1.3. Definition of Key Concepts

This study defines "synergistic development" as the cooperative relationship between higher education and the language industry, emphasizing the importance of resource sharing, collaborative talent cultivation, and achieving mutual benefits for both sectors. The term "foreign language learning motivation" is used to describe the combination of internal and external factors that inspire, maintain, and guide students' behaviors in acquiring foreign language skills. By integrating these two dimensions, the research establishes a comprehensive framework to explore how these interconnected elements contribute to the advancement of educational and linguistic objectives [2, 4].

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Self-Determination Theory and Learning Motivation

Self-determination theory highlights that human motivation is significantly shaped by the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: a sense of control over one's actions, the belief in one's ability to succeed, and meaningful connections with others. In the context of language education, these principles can be translated into actionable strategies that educational institutions and industries can implement to enhance learning outcomes. A sense of control can be nurtured by offering learners personalized pathways, adaptable curricula, and opportunities to make choices regarding content and learning methods [5]. The belief in one's ability to succeed can be reinforced through timely and constructive feedback, tools that adjust to individual learning levels, and challenges that are appropriately aligned with learners' skills. Establishing meaningful connections involves fostering a sense of belonging and engagement with educators, peers, and professional networks. Collaborative initiatives such as joint projects, language exchange programs, and internships can create environments that promote interpersonal interaction and cultural immersion. For instance, technology-driven platforms for language learning can provide tailored tasks that allow learners to progress at their own pace, while integrated industry collaborations can enable the practical application of language skills in real-world scenarios. These approaches collectively address the core psychological needs, thereby sustaining intrinsic motivation and fostering effective language acquisition.

2.2. Expectancy-Value Theory and Achievement Motivation

Expectancy-value theory posits that learners' motivation is influenced by their belief in their ability to succeed and the importance they assign to a given task. In the context of foreign language acquisition, this framework highlights that learners are more likely to engage actively when they perceive both a high likelihood of success and significant value in the learning process. Institutions of higher education can enhance the perceived value

of language learning by demonstrating its direct relevance to career opportunities in fields such as translation, international commerce, digital media, and emerging technologies like AI-driven communication. This connection can be further solidified through collaborations with industry partners, which may include internships, specialized certification programmes, and experiential learning initiatives. Additionally, the expectancy of success can be nurtured by designing structured learning pathways, ensuring the availability of user-friendly resources, and implementing regular formative assessments to monitor progress. For instance, a university-industry partnership could involve students participating in real-world projects where their performance is evaluated based on tangible outcomes and client feedback [6]. Such experiences not only reinforce the practical applicability of language skills but also build confidence and competence. By aligning educational goals with professional aspirations and equipping learners with the tools to excel, the expectancy-value framework serves as a robust mechanism for fostering sustained achievement motivation.

2.3. Synergistic Development Theory of Higher Education and Industry

Synergistic development theory highlights the importance of fostering a dynamic relationship between higher education and industry, advocating for their mutual reinforcement and co-evolution. When applied to foreign language learning, this approach underscores the necessity of creating environments where academic knowledge and practical application are seamlessly integrated. Achieving this integration requires collaborative efforts in curriculum design, the establishment of shared resource platforms, and the development of ecosystems that continuously stimulate learning motivation. For instance, a synergistic model could involve the co-creation of courses tailored to specific professional contexts, such as English for specific purposes (ESP). These courses would embed linguistic instruction within industry-relevant scenarios, utilizing case studies, tools, and resources provided by enterprises. Beyond curriculum innovation, the theory emphasizes the importance of offering students consistent opportunities to apply their learning in real-world professional settings. This could include internships, project-based assignments, and workshops led by industry professionals. Such initiatives not only enhance students' practical competencies but also sustain their motivation by directly linking language education to tangible, real-world applications [7]. Ultimately, synergistic development theory serves as a conceptual framework for fostering university-enterprise collaboration, guiding stakeholders in building a dynamic ecosystem where motivation is both a catalyst and a result of the collaborative process. This approach ensures that language education remains relevant, engaging, and aligned with the evolving demands of the professional world.

Integrating self-determination theory, expectancy-value theory, and synergistic development theory provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing motivation in foreign language learning through university-enterprise cooperation [2]. This integrated approach emphasizes addressing psychological needs, aligning educational outcomes with learners' values, and fostering a co-evolving ecosystem that sustains engagement over time. Self-determination theory highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in maintaining intrinsic motivation, while expectancy-value theory focuses on the alignment of learners' expectations and the perceived value of their efforts. Synergistic development theory complements these perspectives by advocating for a collaborative ecosystem where academic and industry stakeholders work together to create meaningful learning experiences. This could involve designing curricula that incorporate industry-specific scenarios, providing access to shared resources, and facilitating opportunities for students to engage in practical, real-world applications of their language skills. Such a framework not only enriches the theoretical foundation of university-enterprise cooperation but also offers actionable strategies for developing educational models that are both effective and sustainable. By addressing the multifaceted dimensions of motivation, this approach ensures that foreign language education remains

dynamic and responsive to the needs of learners in an increasingly interconnected and technologically advanced world.

3. Current Situation of College Students' Foreign Language Learning Motivation

3.1. Characteristics of Motivation in the Context of Industry-Education Integration

In the context of industry-education integration, the motivation of college students to learn foreign languages is increasingly influenced by practical and career-oriented considerations. Factors such as employability, professional certifications, and alignment with industry demands play a significant role in shaping their learning priorities. This trend underscores a growing recognition among students that language proficiency must be directly tied to tangible career outcomes. Extrinsic motivation, which is driven by measurable benefits such as enhanced job prospects, higher salaries, and the attainment of professional qualifications, has become a dominant force. For instance, language programs developed in collaboration with translation agencies or international trade companies often provide students with opportunities to earn industry-recognized certifications or engage in real-world projects, which can significantly enhance their employability. However, this strong focus on utilitarian goals often leads to a diminished emphasis on intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, which is rooted in a genuine interest in language, culture, and personal development, may remain underdeveloped if not actively nurtured. This can result in students perceiving language learning solely as a functional tool for career advancement, rather than as a means of cultural exploration or self-enrichment. Consequently, education providers face the critical challenge of designing curricula that balance practical utility with humanistic enrichment, ensuring that students develop both sustained interest and a well-rounded perspective on language learning.

3.2. Challenges in Stimulating Motivation

Several challenges impede the effective stimulation of learning motivation within the framework of industry-education integration. One significant issue is the imbalance between utilitarian and humanistic values in language education. An excessive focus on vocational skills can lead to a narrowing of the educational scope, often at the expense of fostering critical thinking, intercultural competence, and cultural sensitivity. This imbalance risks reducing the holistic development of learners. Another challenge lies in the limited involvement of enterprises in the educational process. While partnerships often emphasize internships or short-term projects, there is a notable lack of deeper collaboration, such as joint curriculum development, sustained mentorship programs, or cooperative research initiatives [8, 9]. This limited engagement restricts the potential for aligning educational content with industry needs. Additionally, the absence of personalized learning pathways poses a significant obstacle. Learners exhibit diverse motivations, backgrounds, and learning preferences, making standardized approaches inadequate. Without tailored strategies to address these differences, learners may experience diminished engagement or even fatigue, particularly when the relevance of the educational content is not immediately apparent. Addressing these challenges requires a more nuanced and inclusive approach to curriculum design and industry collaboration.

3.3. Gap between Educational Supply and Industrial Demand

Although efforts have been made to enhance language curricula and incorporate innovative teaching strategies, a significant disparity persists between the educational offerings and the rapidly evolving demands of the language industry. Many academic programs remain predominantly structured around theoretical and academic objectives, rather than aligning with the practical and specialized skills required in professional settings. For instance, while industries increasingly seek bilingual professionals equipped with advanced technical competencies, such as proficiency in AI-driven translation tools or expertise in international business communication, university courses often emphasize

general language proficiency without adequately addressing these specialized applications. This disconnect can lead to students struggling to see a tangible connection between their academic learning and potential career paths, which may diminish their motivation and hinder their ability to adapt to the dynamic requirements of the global job market [6]. Bridging this gap is crucial for fostering sustained engagement among students and ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to excel in competitive and technologically advanced professional environments.

4. Mechanisms for Stimulating Learning Motivation under Synergistic Development

4.1. Policy Orientation and Institutional Incentives

Government and educational authorities play a pivotal role in creating conditions that stimulate learning motivation through carefully designed policies and institutional incentives. By fostering collaboration between universities and the language industry, these entities can provide essential resources and recognition for innovative partnerships. For instance, the establishment of joint training bases allows students to engage in real-world industry projects, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application. Additionally, practice scholarships can be introduced to reward exceptional student performance, serving as a tangible motivator for academic and professional excellence. Certification systems that are acknowledged by both academic institutions and industry stakeholders further reinforce the value of such collaborations. These measures not only enhance students' external motivation by offering concrete rewards but also embed cooperation into institutional frameworks, ensuring its long-term viability and fostering a culture of sustained engagement and innovation.

4.2. Curriculum Innovation and Industrial Linkage

Curriculum innovation plays a pivotal role in ensuring that educational offerings align effectively with the demands of modern industries. This involves incorporating practical language tasks, detailed case studies, and collaborative industry projects directly into the curriculum. For example, English programmes can include translation tasks developed in partnership with industry stakeholders, localisation activities tailored for global e-commerce platforms, or assignments utilizing AI-driven language technologies to replicate real-world professional scenarios. Such initiatives provide students with opportunities to tackle genuine challenges, gain insights into the practical relevance of their academic pursuits, and establish a tangible link between their studies and future career prospects. By fostering this connection, students are more likely to remain motivated, as they can clearly see the value and purpose of their learning journey in achieving professional success.

4.3. Practical Platforms and Multimodal Learning Environments

Developing practical platforms represents a highly effective approach to fostering motivation in learners. These platforms, such as language service centers, online collaboration systems, and advanced AI-powered learning environments, provide diverse and engaging contexts for students to practice industry-relevant skills. For instance, virtual translation laboratories or simulated cross-cultural communication tools enable learners to apply their language abilities in realistic and dynamic scenarios. By integrating visual, auditory, and interactive elements, these multimodal environments significantly enhance the learning experience. They not only make the content more relevant to real-world applications but also address learners' desire for meaningful engagement and skill mastery, thereby promoting deeper motivation and supporting the acquisition of practical competencies.

4.4. Value Shaping and Professional Identity Formation

Sustainable motivation in language education is closely tied to the development of a robust professional identity among learners. This involves not only the acquisition of technical skills but also an appreciation for the broader cultural, communicative, and societal significance of language-related work. Educational institutions, particularly

universities, can play a pivotal role in this process by embedding elements such as professional ethics, intercultural understanding, and cultural studies into their language programmes [10, 11]. For instance, incorporating projects that focus on cultural narratives or initiatives that simulate real-world communication scenarios across diverse regions can provide students with practical and meaningful experiences. These activities help learners internalise the importance of their contributions, fostering a sense of purpose that extends beyond immediate career goals. By aligning external motivations, such as professional success, with intrinsic values like cultural enrichment and personal development, both academic institutions and industry stakeholders can cultivate a comprehensive and enduring motivational framework that supports learners throughout their careers.

5. Optimisation Pathways for Motivation Stimulation

5.1. Building an Ecological Mechanism for Higher Education--Language Industry Cooperation

Establishing an ecological mechanism for cooperation between higher education and the language industry necessitates a strategic balance among diverse stakeholders to create a dynamic and interactive system that fosters sustained motivation and innovation. Within this ecosystem, universities, enterprises, governments, and students each assume distinct yet complementary roles. Universities contribute academic frameworks, advanced research capabilities, and talent cultivation, while enterprises provide practical applications, market insights, and technological platforms. Governments play a crucial role by offering policy support, financial resources, and regulatory frameworks, and students serve as the central agents driving learning and innovation. This interconnected system facilitates a continuous exchange of resources, knowledge, and feedback, enabling adaptive growth and development. For instance, universities can design curricula tailored to industry requirements, enterprises can offer real-world project opportunities, and governments can support collaborative innovation initiatives. Such a model ensures alignment between educational outcomes and industry demands while fostering an environment conducive to ongoing improvement. Institutionalizing these mechanisms allows cooperation to evolve sustainably, moving beyond reliance on isolated projects. This approach ensures that motivation remains dynamic and enduring for all participants, creating a robust foundation for long-term collaboration and innovation within the higher education and language industry ecosystem.

5.2. Creating a Diversified and Intelligent Learning Ecology

The integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and personalized learning platforms plays a pivotal role in establishing a diversified and intelligent learning ecosystem. Adaptive learning systems powered by artificial intelligence can deliver tailored educational experiences that align with individual learners' needs, pace, and preferences. These systems are capable of analyzing learning behaviors to recommend specific tasks, adjust the complexity of content, and provide immediate feedback, thereby fostering greater engagement and enhancing learners' confidence [12]. Additionally, the application of data analytics can guide curriculum development by identifying emerging trends and skill demands within the language industry, enabling educational institutions to refine their content to meet evolving requirements. A variety of learning pathways—including hybrid learning models, modular certifications, industry-focused workshops, and international collaborative projects—can cater to the diverse motivations of students. For example, some learners may prioritize career development, while others may seek cultural enrichment or intellectual stimulation. By offering flexible entry points and diverse learning modalities, the system ensures that language education remains both effective and meaningful. This multifaceted approach not only strengthens external incentives but also nurtures intrinsic motivation, ensuring the sustainability and relevance of learning in a rapidly changing global environment.

5.3. Strengthening Industry-Oriented Talent Training Models

To address the disconnect between academic training and industry requirements, universities should collaborate closely with industry partners to develop talent training models that align student competencies with market demands. This involves adopting a systematic approach that integrates industry insights into curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and evaluation standards [13]. Practical initiatives such as internships, apprenticeships, and project-based learning play a pivotal role in these models, offering students direct exposure to professional environments and opportunities to tackle real-world challenges. For instance, a language programme designed in partnership with a translation technology company could combine theoretical instruction with practical projects involving machine-assisted translation, localisation tasks, and the use of industry-standard tools. Such experiences not only provide students with a tangible sense of accomplishment but also enhance their understanding of professional applications, fostering confidence and readiness for the workforce. Furthermore, industry-oriented training models emphasize the development of practical skills and adaptability, ensuring graduates are equipped to meet evolving industry demands and contribute effectively in dynamic professional contexts.

5.4. Enhancing Learners' Autonomy and Sustainable Development Capacity

Sustainable motivation in education emphasizes the importance of fostering learners' ability to independently manage their growth and development beyond formal academic settings [6, 11]. Encouraging strategies such as goal-setting, monitoring progress, and engaging in self-assessment enables students to take active control of their learning journey. These practices help shift the focus from external incentives to internal drivers, promoting a deeper connection between learning and individual aspirations. For example, incorporating reflective journals, peer evaluations, and collaborative projects into educational frameworks can enhance students' understanding of their progress and the broader significance of their learning experiences. This transformation is essential for cultivating a mindset geared toward lifelong learning. Furthermore, equipping learners with the skills to adapt to technological advancements and evolving industry demands is a critical aspect of sustainable development. This includes nurturing competencies such as digital literacy, cross-cultural communication, and ethical decision-making, which empower individuals to contribute effectively to society while continuously updating their expertise. By embedding principles of independent learning and adaptability into educational systems, institutions and organizations can ensure that learners remain motivated and prepared for both professional achievements and ongoing personal development. This approach creates a resilient foundation for enduring success in an ever-changing global landscape.

6. Conclusion

The coordinated development of higher education and the language industry creates significant opportunities while also introducing complex challenges for enhancing college students' motivation to learn foreign languages. A sustainable and effective pathway requires the integration of psychological and educational principles with practical measures in policy design, curriculum reform, teaching innovation, and university-industry collaboration. In this process, learning motivation should be understood as dynamic, multifaceted, and closely connected to students' academic experiences, career expectations, and sense of personal achievement. Long-term improvement depends on maintaining an appropriate balance between external incentives and the internal recognition of learning value. Such a balanced approach can strengthen persistence, improve learning outcomes, support individual development, and contribute to broader social and economic progress in an increasingly interconnected global environment.

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