

# The Psychological Barriers of Students with Learning Difficulties in Teaching English in Rural Secondary Schools and How to Cope with Them

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**Abstract:** Slow students are a common phenomenon in the education industry, especially for rural students, who have less contact with foreigners and foreign cultures. The most troublesome subject is English, which can directly affect the students' advancement rate, so teachers should focus on the teaching of struggling English students, and schools should pay more attention to the development of students' physical and mental health and the cultivation of their learning ability. Teachers need to improve their working ability, innovate their educational methods, cultivate students' interest in learning English, and base on teaching practice. This paper analyzes and explores how to improve the English literacy and learning ability of rural junior high school students.

## 1. Introduction

Slow students are temporarily lagging behind in their academic performance, and it happens in any class. They may appear because they have limited self-discipline or are not interested in learning, do not pay attention to the lectures in class, and complete their homework with a muddling attitude, which covers up the problems in their learning. Slow learners, such as students with borderline intellectual functioning, represent one of the most challenging student populations for administrators and teachers [1]. Therefore, they have unsatisfactory academic performance. It may also be due to the gap between the teaching resources in rural areas and towns, and students have been applying mechanical patterned learning methods to learn English, resulting in some students' unsatisfactory performance and low comprehensive quality of English.

## 2. Cause of Slow Students in Rural English Teaching

Most of the students in rural areas study very hard and seriously, but their English grades are always unsatisfactory. Students might have different difficulty in learning, and differences come from many factors such as motivation, intellectual ability, attention spans, and physical condition [2].

### 2.1. Learning Methods are Extremely Backward and Single.

Students who have problems in the method of learning always do useless work. When they find that they cannot get great grades, they always take addiction to doing lots of exercises. They will not analyze the root causes of learning problems and not improve their English literacy and ability in essence. The phenomenon of hard-working but bad grades occurs. As a matter of fact, English is a relatively new subject for students in remote villages, so it is very likely that students will not be able to find appropriate ways and means to learn English, resulting in students' efforts not being rewarded in terms of performance.

### 2.2. Teaching Methods are not Pertinent.

Actually, some teaching methods are not applicable to all students, so teachers should innovate their teaching methods to improve the efficiency of teaching [3]. Therefore, teaching should be targeted, and analyze each student's different specific situation carefully. Remember not to precede brows.

### 2.3. Students have poor study habits

A habit is a way of behaving that is formed gradually without any deliberate effort. A person's good habits are developed slowly, and good study habits can directly affect students' performance. English and Chinese are both

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language subjects, and we have a set of study habits that we are accustomed to using to learn the language. When learning English, students will be influenced by the habit of learning English in the same way as they learn Chinese, such as marking English pronunciation with Chinese characters or letters, and applying English grammar with the syntactic law of Chinese determiner-phrase-verb-predicate-complement, etc. In addition to the traditional listening and reviewing habits, students also have the habit of learning English in the same way as they learn Chinese. Besides, the traditional learning style of listening, reviewing and writing homework will greatly affect students' interest in learning, which will have a great negative effect on English learning.

#### **2.4. Weak teaching resources in rural areas**

Compared with the urban areas, the educational construction in rural areas is relatively weak. It is not only the difference in faculty resources, but also the difference in teaching facilities in rural areas compared with those in urban areas. For example, students in urban areas have access to computers at home and can learn through multimedia devices at school. However, some rural schools still have blackboards and chalk, and they rely on outdated teaching infrastructure is far from enough to meet the needs of English teaching as well.

### **3. Effective Methods to Eliminate the Psychological Barriers of Struggling Students.**

Teachers should help students to improve their learning ability and English literacy by focusing on the causes of their difficulties.

#### **3.1. Raising the Awareness of Students**

To improve the active learning motivation of struggling students, it is necessary to tell them the importance of learning English. Rural villages in the central and western regions of China have fewer chances to contact with foreigners, fewer chances to get in touch with foreign cultures and literature, and fewer chances to use English. Therefore, rural students are not interested in learning English and do not recognize the importance of English learning. Teachers should help rural students to cultivate their interest in learning English, and let them realize that junior high school is a key period for learning English to lay a good foundation, which can make them face the future life with a more relaxed and more comfortable mindset. In today's age, with the continuous updating of knowledge, the increasing refinement of the social division of labor, and the emergence of new technologies and modes, English is needed in more and more situations, which puts higher demands on our competence and quality. Relying on learning to move into the future is not an empty talk, but an experience that we need to accumulate. Students have to do what they should do in their school days, correct their mental attitude, treat every class

seriously and do every assignment carefully. Therefore, teachers should guide students to realize the importance of learning English, so that students can set a good attitude towards learning English. In addition, it is necessary to focus on the improvement of learning ability. Because with better learning ability, they can lay a good foundation for their own life with a bright future.

#### **3.2. Motivating Students to Learn English**

Teachers in rural secondary schools need to guide their students to realize the importance of learning English. This will enable students to understand that English is a skillful knowledge subject adapted to the development of the times and the needs of future work, and give them an intrinsic motivation to learn English. Teachers should innovate teaching methods and approaches to motivate students to learn English. After that, the motivation of students to learn English is more conducive to learning and teaching, and also helps students to broaden their thoughts, so that they can internalize and externalize what they have learned. However, due to the different abilities and personalities of each student, teachers need to teach students in a reasonable way, and should pay attention to the different learning progress and development of each student. Teachers can arrange for students to watch English TV programs and listen to English radio stations on a regular basis if conditions permit, and if resources are limited, they can subscribe English newspapers, magazines, and books to be circulated in the classroom, so that students can learn about the world outside of the countryside and outside of China, and realize the importance of the English language through understanding this information.

#### **3.3. Cultivating Students' Interest in Learning**

Albert Einstein once said, "Interest is the best teacher." Fully mobilizing students' initiative in learning English is a prerequisite for cultivating students' interest in learning English. Teachers can improve students' enthusiasm for learning English in the following ways:

##### ***3.3.1 First and foremost, let the students feel the joy of learning knowledge.***

Teachers can take some free time before each class to ask some questions about age, date and weather, class, study, family, etc. and try to ask everyone to answer them. For those students who are not good at learning, the teacher can let others answer the same questions first, and then the students with poor grades will judge the answers correctly or incorrectly. Correct answers should be praised and wrong answers should be motivated. According to the different levels of the students, teachers can make requirements at the beginning and set questions for each student that they can understand, so that they can slowly improve themselves by answering the questions in class. Teachers can also use after-school time to hold small contests for reciting English words and reading texts aloud, and set up corresponding prizes for these contests and use

the small prizes to encourage students to participate in the contests. Students will learn English words more carefully in order to get honors and prizes. Through this kind of game, it can also consolidate students' mastery of English words and carry out activities such as making English hand paintings, letting students draw up their own subjects and make hand paintings in their own way, and give students more encouragement in the process of carrying out the activities, so that they will be interested in the activities.

### ***3.3.2 Designing instructional tasks from the easy to the difficult and complicated***

Teachers should develop teaching tasks according to their aptitude so that teaching is specific and relevant. Based on each student's degree of acceptance of knowledge, they should formulate appropriate teaching programs. They can keep track of their learning, progress and learning styles, and analyze their shortcomings and suggest appropriate improvement measures. Every student wants to be recognized, especially those with learning difficulties, and they also want to be praised. Therefore, teachers can help them improve their learning styles while giving them opportunities to express themselves, letting them speak their thoughts boldly and confidently, encouraging them to think more and try more ways of solving difficult problems that the teacher has not taught them, and giving them a small stage to express themselves. Letting these children who have learning difficulties because of insufficient learning ability or learning problems also get appropriate attention, stimulating students' learning initiative, and giving students a platform to fully demonstrate themselves.

### ***3.3.3 Enhancing students' interest in learning English with the help of information technology.***

Many rural schools are backward in teaching resources, resulting students in a lack of channels to access outside cultural knowledge. Therefore, rural schools should have to strive for more teaching resources and integrate information technology into the junior high school English classroom. Teachers can make use of the rich resources of the Internet to produce exquisite multimedia courseware, realize human-computer interaction, set up innovative modes such as App applications related to classroom management of teaching materials, cloud classrooms, recording and broadcasting classes and so on. Additionally, teachers can make use of digital information technology to realize the interaction between students and students, students and computers, to give students more opportunities to practice spoken English. Information technology can change the way of presenting teaching content. It can transform the boring static textbook knowledge into vivid image dynamic knowledge, and the knowledge will be displayed in a combination of audio and visual way, so that information technology can be presented in the forms of visible images, video and audio. This graphic and vivid form of human-computer interaction can stimulate students' senses, mobilize

students' sensitivity to learning English, so that students can actively absorb English knowledge. With the support of information technology, teachers can create a richer and more diversified English classroom, encouraging students to use more oral expression of textbooks with the knowledge they have learned on their own. For example, in the teaching of the humanist version of the seventh-grade book "Unit3 What color is it"? In this lesson, I will use multimedia equipment in advance to show the pictures related to the content of the text and with standard pronunciation audio. Students can hear the sound by clicking on the corresponding picture, learn the correct pronunciation, attract students' attention through the combination of audio-visual, improve students' concentration in the classroom, and let students master the content of this lesson. In the lead reading, following the completion of reading, I also designed a small game of competition: play the following pictures on the screen, the class will be divided into learning groups to compete. Each time a picture is shown, students have to answer the corresponding color word. By designing the game, the teaching efficiency of the classroom was significantly improved, and the students were motivated to speak English actively in the classroom.[4].

### **3.4.Helping Students Build Confidence in Learning English**

Teachers should cultivate the self-confidence of students who have difficulty in learning English in junior high school: not only to let them "learn" English, but also to let them "learn" English. Teachers should not only teach English knowledge, but also teach students the way of English and skills to improve students' interest in English and their ability to learn on their own, therefore, English education must put learning method guidance at the first place. As an example, many students have difficulty memorizing English vocabulary. The reasons for this phenomenon are not only the different learning habits of individual students, but also the factors such as inappropriate teaching methods and weak self-management ability, in which both students and teachers have neglected the study of the nature, process, characteristics and methods. Many students go through the process of spelling one word after another with Chinese characters or pinyin, which is not only time-consuming and laborious, but also very likely to make mistakes. Therefore, in my English vocabulary class, besides teaching them the ways of distinguishing between similar words and confusing words, I will also work on the memorization techniques and ask the students to take a quick way to memorize according to the characteristics of the particular vocabulary.

### **3.5.Teachers need to be targeted in their teaching**

Teachers should pay attention to the matching of difficulty and ease in the teaching process and reduce the slope of teaching. Struggling students have a common characteristic that they can't understand the content, and

they may have a rebellious mentality and a broken mind. Based on this situation, teachers must pay attention to the individual differences of each student when preparing for teaching, set up a good difficulty and gradient, targeting gradual teaching, so that the excellent students can get the ability to improve, students who are struggling can grasp the basics of the knowledge. The specific methods are as follows:

### *3.5.1 Do a good summarization before the lesson.*

Before learning new knowledge, the teacher should review and summarize the knowledge learned in the previous class. In the opening of the new content, the teacher should use a little time to lead the students to sort out the previous knowledge, so as to achieve coherent learning [5]. For students who really have difficulties in learning, we can carry out a small remedial study after class, and the timely help of the small class can make them keep up with the learning progress.

### *3.5.2 Cultivate the learning interest of students who have difficulty in school.*

Interest is the motivation for students to learn. Teachers should help them to build up their self-confidence, because teachers' encouragement and the achievement of getting the questions right can help the students in need to improve their performance to a great extent. Some backward students are anorexic, playful and parochial, mostly due to the lack of interest in learning. Teachers should adopt the teaching means and methods: they can formulate some interesting assessment mini-classes, which can be assigned by groups to play PK with each other, for example, they can organize small competitions comparing the memorization of vocabulary words. Teachers should not only pay attention to cultivating the learning interests of students with learning difficulties, but also pay attention to cultivating the stability and concentration of their interests, so that students with learning difficulties will be persistent and persevering, and will be dedicated to their studies and strive for excellence, find pleasure in the boring and seek joy in the difficult. When assigning homework after class, we should think of the students who are struggling. The homework should not only help the students to achieve the function of consolidating basic knowledge, but also exercise the students' ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English.

### *3.5.3 Enriching the form of assignments.*

Teachers should pay attention to the hierarchization and diversity of homework design. The traditional form of homework assignment students is the same, but the basic ability of students such as learning habits, learning methods are not the same. Therefore, when designing homework, teachers should pay attention to the basicity, stratification and optionality of homework. In addition, "small meals" can be given to students who are in need, both in terms of the amount of work they need to do, which

is only for accuracy but not for quantity, and their homework can be halved, and classroom notes can be used as an alternative to homework for students who are especially in need, and in terms of the degree of difficulty, which is only for basic questions, but not for the more difficult ones.

## **4. Conclusion**

Every normal child has enough intelligence and potential, and what educators have to do is that they should try to study how to tap students' potential effectively. The factors of learning difficulties of English struggling students come from many aspects inside and outside, which reveals that transforming rural English struggling students requires the joint efforts of society, families, teachers and students themselves [6]. This paper analyzes the reasons for the emergence of English struggling students in rural secondary schools, and puts forward targeted and effective innovative teaching methods. I believe that if we adopt scientific teaching methods, we can help students overcome the psychological barriers to learning English, cultivate students' enthusiasm for learning English, help students improve their learning ability and comprehensive English literacy, and be able to convert English struggling students into English superior students. I hope this paper can be useful and helpful to educators.

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