

# Measures to Overcome High School Students English Learning Burnout

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## Abstract

High school is an important period for the cultivation of academic emotions and a key stage for talent training. And Foreign language learning is the main subject. However, in reality, under the influence of the baton of the college entrance examination, English learning is more test-oriented. High school students often faced with heavy learning tasks and have huge psychological pressure, so their academic emotions are also facing serious challenges. In particular, they have learning anxiety and burnout, which will not only influence students' physical and mental development, but also affect their academic performance. This situation highlights the need for an explore the foreign language learning burnout among Chinese high school students. This article explains the definition of emotional intelligence and foreign language learning burnout, analyzes the causes and how to alleviate it from multi-aspect. This provide some enlightenment for foreign language teaching, improve the teaching effectiveness and promote high school students learning well-being.

## Keywords

Learning Burnout; High School; Foreign Language Learning; Measures.

## 1. Introduction

The NECS (The 2017 edition was revised in 2020) puts forward specific requirements on how to cultivate students' emotional strategies: "Cultivate students' active and positive attitude towards English learning, and continuously enhance their self-confidence in learning; Students can analyze the causes of anxiety in the learning process, use effective methods to self-adjust, and persist in learning with perseverance Students are able to use English boldly, and correct mistakes when they occur, etc."Therefore, English teachers should not only cultivate students' key competence in English subjects, but also regulate students' learning emotions in teaching, so that students can maintain a positive attitude towards learning.[1]

Looking back at recent domestic studies on the relationship between second-language learning emotions and academic performance, it can be found that foreign learning anxiety and enjoyment have received the most attention and are the more common two second language learning emotions. "Burnout" is one of the hot topics in the study of emotions among foreign language teachers, while there are fewer studies on student burnout. English education in China is more test-oriented, so students are more likely to experience burnout, which affects students' learning effectiveness and happiness. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out corresponding research and take the necessary measures to reduce burnout.

## 2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

### 2.1. Purpose of the Study

Under the background of positive psychology, this paper discusses the problem of learning burnout of foreign language learners and analyzes the causes of learning burnout and

corresponding countermeasures. It plays a certain reference and reference significance for English educators in China..

## 2.2. Significance of the Study

Anxiety has long attracted the attention of graduate students from all over the world, and the impact of other emotions (such as burnout on academic performance) has been less appreciated. This study can provide theoretical support for the control-value theory of academic emotions and the theory of affective filtering hypothesis and conducive to enriching and expanding the theoretical research related to emotional intelligence.

On the one hand, this study reflects the importance and necessity of second-language learners' academic emotions and calls on teachers to pay attention to learners' learning burnout. And then provide practical reference for the actual teaching of educators. On the other hand, it proposes a reference path on how to alleviate learning burnout, which can help students to provide constructive help, improve students' mental health and happiness in second language learning.

## 3. Definition of Key Concept

### 3.1. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, perceive, assess, understand, and regulate their own and others' emotions, which include positive emotion and negative emotion. Positive emotion mainly include joy, amusement, admiration and so, which focus on positive psychological research. Negative emotion mainly include learning burnout, learning anxiety and so on. In the field of education, the positive impact of emotional intelligence on individual academic achievement and well-being has been confirmed by a large number of studies. Under the inspiration of positive psychology, researchers are increasingly focusing on the emotional experience and well-being of second language learners. Emotional intelligence is an important dimension of well-being, which has an vital impact on language learning and positively predicts L2 learning achievement.[2]

### 3.2. Learning Burnout

Learning burnout refers that ,when students have no interest in learning or lack motivation but they have to do it, which resulting in a series of inappropriate behaviors to avoid learning. This negative emotion can lead to emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and low personal fulfillment in learners. It's not only affecting students' mental health, but also will also have a certain impact on the quality of learning. Hu & Schaufeli points out that students are prone to burnout due to the need to complete purposeful, organized mandatory activities, such as attending classes, doing homework, and taking exams. [3]"Burnout" refers to students' emotional exhaustion and cynicism, as well as reduced academic efficacy and self-confidence. Schaufeli et al. define learning burnout as a negative learning psychology, which refers to the phenomenon that students gradually lose interest in learning under long-term academic pressure or academic burden, resulting in emotional exhaustion, alienation from academics and low sense of personal achievement, etc., which are specifically manifested as students are not interested in learning or even bored, low learning efficiency, negative treatment of learning activities, etc.

## 4. The Causes of Learners' Learning Burnout

### 4.1. Learning Pressure

Education is a serious matter in China, and competitive exams determine whether students can be admitted to high schools and universities, and thus their career prospects. Teaching quality

is assessed by students' test scores, which means that students' performance is directly related to teachers' salaries and reputations. Also, the parents will give students more pressure in order to guarantee an ideal academic performance in the College Entrance Examination. As a result, teachers and parents put tremendous performance pressure on students. Burnout is more prevalent among Chinese students. Due to learning needs, cynical and detached attitudes toward one's own learning, a sense of powerlessness over learning will appear in the high school students. The research has shown that academic sentiment is closely related to students' personal achievement goals or goal orientation. Students faced with the cruel future, who set modest goals and perform better are more likely to experience positive emotions and less negative emotions during learning activities. However, if the goal was too high, students may trigger negative emotions, and too low a goal may cause students to lose interest in the English learning process. Therefore, students usually experience the multi-aspect learning pressure from parents, teachers and so on.[4]

#### **4.2. Test-oriented Education**

Under the test orientation, the teaching content is selected according to the content of the test, and students rarely could choose their favorite learning content. Naturally, they have a lower interest in English learning. Similarly, due to the huge teaching pressure, teachers mostly use cramming teaching methods to impart knowledge, and students' sense of learning participation is not strong. English is the foreign language for Chinese people, and there have no native speakers to help students master this language. And due to the heavy population and limited resource, students only through rote learning method to promote their language scores, such as recite large number of vocabulary and do grammar test, which will make students feel very tired and bored. However, these abundant learning task cannot be changed due to the College Entrance Examination. Referring to the control-value theory, negative emotions such as learning burnout that students develop may be related to their cognitive abilities. For example, when a student's English comprehension skills are insufficient, it may cause them to be unable to keep up with the pace of teaching, and as the difficulty of learning increases, they may find it difficult to complete the task, and cannot get a good score. Eventually they become bored with learning, or even give up on themselves, which will be directly reflected in their declining grades.[5]

### **5. Measures Taken to Relieve Learning Burnout**

#### **5.1. Give Students Adequate Teachers' Emotional Support**

The respect, trust, and care that students feel from teachers are all emotional support from teachers. The study found that teachers' emotional support is not only beneficial to improve students' learning engagement and learning autonomy, but also reduce students' anxiety and improve students' self-efficacy. Due to the high learning intensity and learning pressure, students are prone to decline in learning motivation and interest, and reduced learning efficiency, which will cause students' emotional fluctuations. When students are in the burnout period, teachers can give students encouragement and care in a timely manner and establish an equal and friendly teacher-student relationship with students. It can help urge students to achieve their English learning goals and rekindle confidence and enthusiasm for English learning, so teachers' emotional support is extremely important.[6]

#### **5.2. Add Corresponding Training Content on Negative Emotional Coping Strategies in Foreign Language Teacher Education**

Cooperative learning can give students a sense of belonging in the classroom, stimulate students' positive thinking, especially help introverted students reduce learning burnout and frustration, and enhance students' sense of "ownership". [7]Therefore, teachers should conduct

more independent, cooperative and inquiry-based learning activities, so that students can fully take the initiative, integrate into the collective, and learn to explore, so as to reduce the misunderstanding of misconceptions and reduce the fatigue of learning.

### 5.3. Give Students Effective Emotional Intelligence Training

Effective emotional intelligence training can not only “teach people to fish”, but also have more practical effects. Schools should set relevant courses for students to realize that, it is normal for them producing negative learning emotion, especially learning burnout. And students can hold a objective attitude for their emotion. These course can enables students to cope with learned emotional regulation methods when exhausted, low sense of efficacy, reduce academic burnout, and promote academic performance. [8]In particular, teachers can help students build good interpersonal relationships and enhance students’ experience of good emotions by developing their ability to observe and express emotions. It also helps students control their emotions and reduce the impact of negative emotions on students by teaching emotional management. After students discover and identify their emotions, teachers can use role-play and other means to improve their emotional intelligence while applying what they have learned.

### 5.4. Provide Emotional and Strategic Support

The second language learning process is full of difficulties and challenges, and learners will inevitably have a variety of negative emotional experiences. Therefore, it is important for students to be aware of their strengths and make full use of these strengths to face various difficulties or negative experiences in the learning process, find positive values in them, and turn them into positive experiences. Due to the staged characteristics of psychological growth and language learning, the teacher need to show sufficient patience to learning burnout students. When faced with dictation difficulties or poor classroom performance, teachers can try to adopt an inclusive attitude and give them room for improvement. Second, some students don’y grasp the key methods of language learning, which will lead to unideal learning achievements. Therefore, these students will produce negative learning emotion, namely, English learning burnout. Teachers can design appropriate learning activities, which align with the student's zone of recent development, in order to achieve the goal through effort. Finally, a collaborative learning approach is recommended for these students to work with classmates who are more proficient in English,so they can learn from the peers.[9][10]

## 6. Conclusion

This study explores the causes of English academic burnout among high school English learners in China, and provides some practical suggestions for this phenomenon. At present, the negative career prospects bring the high school students more pressure about their future, but the actual learning performance is not ideal for them. What’s more, the poor English learning environment also make students have no interest for language. So it is unavoidable for these students produce English learning burnout. It is not optimistic for the phenomenon of English learning burnout in basic education in China. Therefore, it is necessary to provide practical suggestions. At first, parents, teachers and peers are the most important environmental factors which will affect learning emotion. Actually, students are more likely to communicate with their friends or peers, only these person can understand their pressure. And parents can keep a calm and loved family atmosphere, which will positively influence students mood. If parents always push children to get a high score, students may produce some psychological illness. And then, in the process of foreign language teaching, teachers should not only give students high-quality academic support, but also establish good teacher-student friendship with students. And teachers can pay proper attention to students’ learning dynamics and mental outlook and promote students to help each other in learning and life. In a word, learning burnout is an unavoidable phenomenon

under the situation of our country, so we should work together to help high school students overcome this difficulty.

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