

Research on the Causes and Intervention Strategies of Russian Learning Burnout in Vocational College Students

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Abstract: With the deepening implementation of the “Belt and Road” Initiative, there is a growing social demand for applied Russian talents. However, in the practice of Russian teaching in vocational colleges, the widespread phenomenon of learning burnout among students has become a bottleneck restricting the quality of talent cultivation. Based on frontline teaching experience, this paper deeply analyzes the multidimensional causes of student learning burnout, mainly including: weak academic foundation and low learning efficacy, utilitarian learning motivation and vague goals, single teaching model and lack of language environment, and anxiety arising from uncertain employment prospects. Based on this, and from the perspectives of educational ecology and humanistic theory, this paper proposes the construction of a comprehensive “four-in-one” intervention strategy system. This system aims to reshape students’ self-efficacy, optimize classroom teaching models, create an immersive language environment, and strengthen career guidance and psychological counseling, in order to effectively alleviate learning burnout among vocational college Russian students and enhance their learning motivation and comprehensive vocational abilities.

Keywords: Vocational College Russian; Learning Burnout; Cause Analysis; Intervention Strategies; Self-Efficacy

1. Introduction

As an important component of higher education in China, vocational education bears the mission of cultivating high-quality technical and skilled talents needed for the front lines of production, construction, service, and management. The establishment of Russian majors in vocational colleges is precisely a response to national strategies, meeting the urgent demand for applied foreign language talents in economic and trade exchanges with countries and regions along the Belt and Road. However, compared with undergraduate students, vocational college students have specific characteristics in their learning foundation, study habits, and psychological characteristics. In actual teaching practice, it is not difficult to find that many Russian majors exhibit varying degrees of learning burnout shortly after enrollment: they feel mentally exhausted, lack enthusiasm and interest in learning Russian, exhibit negative learning behaviors, and even develop thoughts of academic aversion and dropout. This state not only seriously affects individual academic achievement and mental health but is also directly related to the quality and sustainable development of Russian talent cultivation in vocational colleges.

Currently, domestic and international research on learning burnout mostly focuses on basic education or general English, while specialized research on learning burnout among students of less commonly taught languages, especially in vocational colleges, is still insufficient. Therefore, this study, combining years of frontline teaching observation and reflection, aims to systematically sort out the internal mechanisms and external inducements of learning burnout among vocational college Russian students and explore practical educational intervention paths, providing theoretical reference and practical guidance for improving the current state of Russian teaching in vocational colleges and stimulating students’ endogenous motivation.

2. Multidimensional Analysis of the Causes of Learning Burnout among Vocational College Russian Students

Learning burnout is not caused by a single factor but is the product of the interaction of multiple factors such as the individual, educational environment, and social expectations. For vocational college Russian students, the causes are more complex and specific.

2.1 The Vicious Cycle of Weak Academic Foundation and “Learned Helplessness”

The student body in vocational colleges primarily consists of those with lower college entrance examination scores. Most of them failed to develop good study habits and a solid knowledge system during their basic education stage. Russian, as a completely new Indo-Eu-

ropean language vastly different from English, with its complex grammatical case declensions, unique pronunciation, and writing system, poses significant cognitive challenges for beginners. Many students struggle from the alphabet learning stage. As the course deepens, grammatical difficulties such as noun gender, number, and case, and verb aspect, tense, and mood follow one after another, leading to cognitive overload.

As Professor Lian Rong pointed out in his research, learning burnout is closely related to students' "low sense of achievement"^[1]. When students invest considerable time and effort but see no improvement in their grades, repeated frustrating experiences can lead to a psychological state of "learned helplessness" – the belief that "no matter how hard I try, I cannot learn it well." This psychological state severely erodes students' academic self-efficacy, leading them to attribute academic failure to their own lack of ability—a stable, uncontrollable factor—thus giving up effort and falling into a vicious cycle of "weak foundation → cannot learn → low sense of achievement → learning aversion → even weaker foundation." The authors often hear students sigh in class: "Teacher, I'm just not cut out for languages," or "Russian is too difficult, I'll never figure out the six cases." These are typical manifestations of low self-efficacy and learned helplessness.

2.2 Utilitarian Learning Motivation and Lack of Intrinsic Drive

Learning motivation is the key factor driving sustained learning behavior. The learning motivation of vocational college students often shows significant "external utilitarian" characteristics. They may choose the Russian major not out of love for the language or the culture of the target country, but based on practical considerations such as "this major is relatively niche with lower admission scores" or "I heard it's easier to find a job if you study Russian." Such external motivation might provide some learning drive initially, but due to its fragility and transience, it is difficult to support students in overcoming the difficulties and monotony of the long-term learning process.

Once students find learning Russian much more difficult than expected, or begin to doubt future employment prospects, the externally-driven motivation quickly fades, and learning behavior subsequently loses direction. Compared with students who study out of a love for Russian literature, music, or a strong interest in cross-cultural communication, students lacking intrinsic drive are more likely to feel lost and 倦怠 when encountering bottlenecks. Their learning activities become a chore of passively coping with exams and credits, rather than an intellectual enjoyment of active exploration and acquisition of new knowledge.

2.3 Single Teaching Model and Lack of Language Practice Environment

Traditional Russian classrooms in vocational colleges largely continue the traditional teacher-centered teaching model of "teacher lectures, students listen." Classroom activities mostly focus on grammar explanation, text translation, and vocabulary memorization, lacking interactivity, fun, and challenge. This "cramming" teaching method overlooks the characteristics of vocational students who are active in thinking and strong in practical ability but have less patience for theoretical study, making it difficult to stimulate their initiative and participation. Over time, the classroom atmosphere becomes dull, student attention wanders, and learning burnout naturally breeds.

Furthermore, language learning is inseparable from a real communicative environment. Vocational colleges generally lack a target language environment, and students have few opportunities to be exposed to Russian after class. Although modern technology provides abundant online resources, the lack of systematic guidance and mandatory tasks means students' initiative in utilizing them independently is not high. It is in this dilemma of "learning but struggling to apply" that our students gradually lose confidence and pleasure in using the language. Moreover, the teaching methods employed profoundly influence the students' learning environment. Under such circumstances, if exam-oriented thinking is still overly retained, it becomes difficult to flexibly apply new teaching methods and promote the development of students' Russian language ability^[2]. Students' language ability remains at the level of "dumb Russian," further reinforcing the sense of uselessness and burnout in their learning.

2.4 Goal Anxiety Triggered by Uncertainty in Employment Prospects

Although talent demand exists at the macro level, for specific vocational college students, future job positions, work content, salary, and other aspects remain highly uncertain. They often hear negative comments such as "Russian has a narrow scope of employment" or "Even undergraduate students struggle to find jobs, what about us associate degree students?". This anxiety about the future is projected back onto

their current studies, causing students to doubt the value and utility of the knowledge they are acquiring: “Will I really use what I’m learning so hard now?”

When students cannot establish a clear and positive connection between their current learning and future career development, learning behavior loses the support of long-term meaning. The lack of a sense of purpose makes them more likely to focus on the pain and frustration in the learning process, thereby amplifying burnout emotions. Pessimistic perception of professional employment prospects is an important variable predicting the level of learning burnout among college students.

3. Comprehensive Intervention Strategies for Learning Burnout among Vocational College Russian Students

Addressing the causes mentioned above, alleviating learning burnout among vocational college Russian students is by no means an overnight task, nor is it the responsibility of a single department. It requires building a comprehensive, multi-dimensional intervention system throughout teaching, management, psychological counseling, and career planning.

3.1 Reshaping Self-Efficacy: Implementing the “Small Steps, Quick Runs, Cumulative Success” Teaching Method

The key to Overcoming the cycle of ‘learned helplessness’ is to create continuous successful experiences for students and reshape their self-efficacy. Teachers should implement the principles of “teaching students according to their aptitude” and the “zone of proximal development.”

Target Decomposition and Task Layering: Decompose grand learning goals into a series of specific, operable, and achievable small tasks. For example, instead of requiring students to master all case declensions at once, focus on conquering the usage of one case in a specific scenario each lesson. Homework and tests can also be designed at different levels, such as basic and advanced questions, allowing every student to “jump and reach.”

Positive Feedback and Attribution Guidance: Teachers should promptly and specifically praise any progress students make, such as improved pronunciation or correct use of a sentence pattern. More importantly, they should guide students to attribute success to their own efforts and effective learning methods (“Look, because you persisted in reading aloud after class, your language sense has improved greatly!”), while attributing temporary difficulties to unstable, controllable factors such as insufficient effort or methods needing improvement.

Establishing Growth Portfolios: Encourage students to establish personal Russian learning growth portfolios, recording every word mastered from scratch, every sentence pattern, every successful classroom presentation, or test score. This visualized “history of progress” is a powerful weapon against frustration and low self-confidence.

3.2 Optimizing the Classroom Teaching Model: Promoting a “Student-Centered, Task-Driven” Classroom Revolution

Changing the one-way knowledge transmission model and transforming the classroom into a more dynamic learning environment is a direct means to stimulate intrinsic motivation.

Introducing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Design “tasks” close to students’ future professional scenarios, such as simulating business receptions, product presentations, and order negotiations. Students work in groups, actively looking up vocabulary, learning sentence patterns, and practicing dialogues to complete real tasks. In this process, language becomes a tool for task completion, and learning becomes an exploratory process of problem-solving, greatly enhancing initiative and interest.

Integrating Modern Educational Technology: Make full use of multimedia, language learning apps, clips of Russian films and TV shows, Russian songs, and other resources to create vivid and interesting teaching situations. For example, using platforms like “Kahoot!” to organize vocabulary competitions, or using dubbing software for film clip dubbing exercises, can effectively engage students’ multiple senses and reduce learning monotony.

Infusing Cultural Teaching and Ideological and Political Education into the Curriculum: Language is the carrier of culture. Integrating Russian history, geography, customs, art, and other cultural knowledge according to the teaching content, and holding events like Russian

Culture Festivals or Food Festivals, can satisfy students' curiosity, cultivate their empathy and understanding of the target culture, and emotionally bring them closer to Russian. Meanwhile, exploring the ideological and political elements within the curriculum, such as telling stories of cooperation between China, Russia, and Central Asian countries under the Belt and Road framework, and introducing the achievements of outstanding alumni in the foreign trade field, can guide students to link personal learning with national development, sublimating the meaning of learning.

3.3 Creating an Immersive Language Environment: Building an “Integrated In-and-Out-of-Class, On-line-and-Offline” Practice Platform

Strive to break through the time and space limitations of the classroom and create more opportunities for students to “use Russian.”

Establishing a “Campus Russian Corner”: Regularly hold Russian Corner activities, inviting foreign teachers, international students, industry mentors, and outstanding senior students to participate, engaging in free communication around specific themes. Create a relaxed, inclusive, and error-encouraging communicative atmosphere, allowing students to dare to speak and enjoy speaking.

Building Virtual Language Communities: Utilize WeChat groups, QQ groups, or professional learning platforms to establish class Russian learning communities. Teachers can daily assign “Russian check-in” tasks (e.g., reading a passage aloud, sharing a news vocabulary), encouraging students to post updates and exchange insights in Russian, making use of fragmented time.

Expanding Second Classrooms and Practice Bases: Actively establish connections with local Russian trade enterprises, travel agencies, etc., to organize student visits, internships, and even undertake simple translation tasks (e.g., translating product manuals). Authentic workplace experience is the most powerful proof of the value of student learning and can 极大地 stimulate their learning enthusiasm. Real language use experience is one of the most effective ways to stimulate and maintain learner motivation.

3.4 Strengthening Career Orientation and Psychological Counseling: Building a Dual Support System of “Career Planning and Psychological Support”

Helping students see the way forward and reducing their anxiety about the future is the fundamental strategy for stabilizing learning emotions.

Front-loading Career Planning Education: From the first year of enrollment, systematic career education should be carried out. Invite industry experts and outstanding alumni to give lectures, introducing the work content, development paths, and market demand for Russian talents in various industries, allowing students to have a clear and positive 认知 of their future career landscape.

Offering Professionally-Oriented Courses with Vocational Characteristics: In the senior years, based on regional economic characteristics and employment market demand, offer highly applied directional courses such as “Spoken Business Russian,” “Tourism Russian,” and “Practical Russian for Cross-Border E-commerce,” directly linking student learning with employment, ensuring they learn what is applicable.

Establishing a Sound Psychological Support System: The psychological counseling centers of vocational colleges should proactively pay attention to the learning pressure issues of foreign language students. Counselors and professional teachers need the ability to identify early signs of learning burnout. For students showing obvious symptoms of burnout, timely heart-to-heart conversations and professional psychological counseling should be provided to help them adjust their mindset and manage stress. The focus is on strengthening ideological guidance for students across all grades in vocational colleges, popularizing professional identity education within the scope of vocational colleges, advocating for students to apply professional knowledge to solve problems in social practice, and mobilizing the subjective initiative of vocational college students to serve society and share in social development ^[3].

4 Conclusion

Learning burnout among vocational college Russian students is a complex educational phenomenon with multiple causes. It reflects the universal challenges currently faced by foreign language education in vocational colleges regarding student quality, teaching models, motivation stimulation, and career guidance. To cure this “stubborn illness,” we educators need to jump out of the narrow perspective of “teaching language for language’s sake” and examine and understand our students from a broader educational ecology perspective and with deeper hu-

manistic care.

We must recognize that they are not just “students learning Russian,” but also young individuals full of personality, eager for recognition, and facing growth confusions. The core of intervention strategies lies in “empowerment” and “connection”: empowering students through teaching innovation and psychological support to reshape their confidence and ability; and closely “connecting” student learning with future career development and personal growth through career guidance and environmental creation, endowing their learning with a profound sense of meaning and value. This is a systematic project that requires multi-party collaboration and long-term efforts from schools, teachers, enterprises, and the students themselves. Only in this way can we effectively ignite the learning enthusiasm of vocational college Russian students and cultivate applied Russian talents who truly meet the needs of the times, are mentally and physically healthy, and have solid skills.

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