

# The Application of WeChat Public Account About Energy English in the English Learning of Energy Major

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## Abstract

The rapid development of electronic science has contributed to the emergence of new media platforms especially WeChat Admins. Traditional ways of teaching, which have commonly been conducted in classrooms, have confronted great challenges, leaving room for researches on ESP teaching. Our group studies the learning situation and the influence received in using a WeChat Admin to learn Energy English. The study found that the WeChat Admin has played a positive role in raising students' interest, broadening their scale of knowledge on energy English and making up for limitations of class-learning.

Keywords: Energy English; WeChat Admin; ESP learning; Traditional ways of teaching

## 1. The Development of Mobile Online Learning

With the development of China's social economy and the improvement of people's living standards, the Internet has become an indispensable part of people's life. According to the data of The 45<sup>th</sup> China Statistical Report on Internet Development (China Broadcast, 2020) released by CNNIC on April 28, 2020, "as of March 2020, the number of Internet users in China was 904 million, and the Internet penetration rate was 64.5%; the scale of mobile Internet users was 897 million, and the proportion of Internet users using mobile phones to access the Internet reached 99.3%; and the number of netizens in rural areas was 255 million, accounting for 28.2% of all Internet users. Among the netizens in China, students are the most, accounting for 26.9%. Affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, online education has witnessed an explosive growth." By March 2020, the number of online education users in China has reached 423 million, accounting for 46.8% of the total Internet users, with an increase of 110.2% compared with the end of 2018. At the beginning of 2020, the primary and secondary schools across the country have to shut down, therefore, 265 million students turned to online courses, The user demand was fully released, and online education applications showed explosive growth. In this context, mobile online learning is more and more popular because of its convenience and fragmentation (Wang Jingyang, Yao Xiaoli, Yang Lan, 2020).

"On January 9, 2020, WeChat released "2019 WeChat Data Report". According to the report, as of September 2019, the number of WeChat monthly activity index was 1.152 billion, with an increase of 6% year-on-year. "The WeChat admin platforms has been increasing year by year since its development in 2012. After years of rising, the rate of increase declined in 2017. "There are 20 million WeChat official accounts in 2017. "In 2017, the number of active official accounts was 3,500,000, with 797 million fans. In the WeChat official account with high visiting frequency or attention, the official accounts concerning learning and education account for 34%. In the wave of nationwide learning, the WeChat admin platforms have become an important tool for Chinese people to learn (Shi Yueping, 2020).

WeChat admin platform, or official account, is a media platform of WeChat APP launched by Tencent Inc, aiming to provide users with information. With an endless stream of English learning in China, the WeChat admin platform with learning English as its content, is emerging one after another in the recent years. Unlike micro-blog's fission mode of spreading, WeChat admin platform has the functions of group message and one-to-one communication. Users can receive all messages from the official account only if they click on "follow this account", which provides great convenience for English learners to learn and accumulate in fragmented learning, thus attracting more and more audiences to choose to learn and improve themselves in their spare time (Wang Pan, 2019).

## **2. The Advantages of Learning on WeChat Admin Platform**

### **2.1 Learning method**

The traditional teaching mode is mainly based on teachers' teaching fixed textbook knowledge to students. The long-term invariable form and content will make learners tired or even bored, thus losing their interest in learning. As a new knowledge acquisition channel, WeChat official account is flexible, novel, fragmented and convenient. It is more attractive to learners with the help of multimedia methods such as pictures and videos.

Moreover, the posts of WeChat official account is released regularly, and users can search historical information and review previous contents through search bars, and solve the doubts by WeChat's automatic reply . At the same time, they can communicate with the creators of the official account or the authors of WeChat posts, which will enhance the learning effect.

### **2.2 Learning content**

As one of today's important media, WeChat Admin Platforms always receives information from all over the world, usually with current events as the background, closely linked with the life of the audience, and the posts are easier to accept, understand and absorb. At the same time, as social media, WeChat carries a large number of netizens' experience and views. Thus, the content it conveys is more rich and comprehensive so that learners can broaden their horizons and increase their knowledge.

The official account of WeChat is easy to start and operate, attracting large numbers of talents from all walks of life, who give birth to official accounts related to all aspects. For the same kind of knowledge, there may be a large number of WeChat platform creators to explain and guide the knowledge from different aspects. Take English as an example, there are many branches in this category, such as medical English, scientific English, energy English and so on, which play roles in different industries and fields. Therefore, learners can learn the content in all aspects they are interested in.

### **2.3 Learning effect**

With the rapid increase in the popularity of mobile devices such as mobile phones, the people, especially the younger generation, have an unprecedented dependence on mobile devices, and generally have a high acceptance of messages pushed by mobile terminals. Therefore, compared with monotonous reading books, WeChat account posts, which are based on science and technology and keep up with the trend of the times, also provide great convenience for learners to acquire knowledge anytime and anywhere, making them willing to absorb knowledge. At the same time, due to the characteristics of media, posted articles not only contain text, but also interesting pictures, news, videos and so on, which can greatly improve learners' interest.

Learning interest has a direct impact on learning effect. The favor for the WeChat official account has enhanced the learning motivation of the learners. The fragmented learning mode has shown a gradual accumulation, which has a significant impact on deepening the learning impression and consolidating learning effects (Jing Lin, Yuan Xiuli, Zheng Ruolin, 2020).

### **3. The Design Idea of WeChat Admin Platform**

Energy English weekly is established by students of English Department of China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing) in 2017. Based on the school's energy characteristics, the team members founded the official account based on the teaching content of the energy English course, and applied it to the offline learning of energy English major, so as to explore the impact of the WeChat official account on the learning of energy English.

The platform is called Energy English Weekly (EEW), with one team member posting an article every week and sending them to all target learners at a fixed time. Most of the contents of this paper are from the series of energy English textbooks compiled by our English teachers or other relevant literature in the field of energy. The articles posted are mainly divided into "cutting-edge science popularization", "term introduction" and "selected literature". The editors will select different topics every week, and combine with the current social situation, refine and edit the teaching materials or literature, give the translation, and select the new words, difficult words and professional terms from the paragraphs to annotate, in order to help non-English Majors (especially energy-related majors) improve the ability to use energy English and expand their knowledge.

After the operation of the official account, the team members constantly improved the content and quality of the posted articles according to the majors and learning conditions of the followers. They also listened to many followers' feedback. At the later period of the operation, they designed the questionnaire on the usage of energy English official account and sent it out, so as to know the usage, effect, suggestions and opinions of the official account from various aspects.

### **4. Survey and Analysis**

With the student of energy related majors in China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing) as the research subjects, the team designed the questionnaire concerning the usage of the energy English official account. They have distributed 70 questionnaires and collected 70, of which 70 were valid, with an effective rate of 100%. The 70 participants were mainly freshmen and juniors, including 43 males and 27 females. The authors analyzed the results of the questionnaire in terms of cognition, usage and feedback:

#### **4.1 Cognition of the admin platforms**

76% of students said they would visit WeChat official account frequently in their daily life, and 79% of students said they would often use it to learn. 81% of students have followed the official account concerning English learning, and 87% said that they were willing to use WeChat official account for English learning.

Among all the students following official account about English learning, about 46% said that the official accounts they followed provided contents concerning energy English learning, while 54% said that the platforms they followed did not provide the similar content. With the increasing development of the new media, WeChat official account has been popularized with its convenient form and powerful communication power, and has occupied a position in the field of English education. Contemporary college students also have more and more intense willingness to learn from WeChat official account. The rise of online learning platform which is an inevitable trend seems as if bamboo shoots after a spring rain. But the official account numbers are very limited, and the official account of English is not enough. Therefore, the online learning of College English for energy professional English has great room for its development. However, despite the emergence of various official accounts of English learning, official account about professional English learning is very limited. There are even few learning platforms for energy English, which ignore the needs of learners in energy major. Therefore, the

online learning of energy English with the support of WeChat official accounts for college students still has large room for its development.

#### **4.2 Use of the admin platforms**

As for the cultivation of learning interest in energy English with the use of EEW, about 54% of the students are satisfied, and 14% are quite satisfied; about the role of EEW on improving the proficiency of energy English terms and vocabulary, 51% of the students are satisfied, and about 26% are quite satisfied; concerning the role of the articles posted on increasing the knowledge, 49% of the students are satisfied, and about 26% are quite satisfied; in terms of the role as a complement of the energy English class, 57% of the students are satisfied, and about 17% are quite satisfied. 69 of the 70 participants said that the long-term use of EEW could promote or improve their energy English learning.

To sum up, the EEW developed by the research group is helpful to improve the vocabulary of English learners majoring in energy, expand their knowledge of energy English, and improve their reading comprehension competence of relevant literature and materials. In addition to consolidating the basic capabilities of energy English, the official account can serve as a good complement to the English classroom, help improve the learners' autonomy of the energy majors, and cultivate students' initiative to acquire and absorb knowledge, which will be beneficial in supplementing English classroom learning of the energy major.

#### **4.3 Feedback**

The authors also collected the feedback from the students through questionnaires to help the research group understand the problems of official account and improve the operation.

About the articles posted on official account, only 1 of the 70 respondents find the material difficult, 3 said the material was relatively difficult, and the most students thought the difficulty of the articles was appropriate. Over 90% of the students thought that the articles were widely distributed and rich in content. Over 60% of the students thought the notes of the articles were satisfactory. 57% of the students expressed their satisfaction with the layout design of the official account, and 21% of the students expressed great satisfaction. Some participants gave detailed suggestions for improvement, such as "For the students with strong specialty, the difficulty can be increased appropriately", "Typesetting can be improved by referring to other official account" and "professional frontier literature can be added". It is obvious that the difficulties of the most articles posted are suitable for most users, and the annotation is generally satisfactory. However, the fields involved in the posts are relatively limited, and the posts do not have timeliness and universality, which may reduce learners' interest in learning. In addition, the editors can classify the difficulties of the articles to meet the learning needs of different levels of the followers. In addition, the layout design of the posts can also be more exquisite so as to improve the dissemination of push and attract more followers.

Through the analysis and research of the questionnaire from the three aspects of cognition, use and feedback, the authors find that the development of official account of energy English conforms to the trend of information dissemination by contemporary new media platforms and to the trend of online learning of contemporary college students, and plays a complementary role in promoting energy English learning from the aspects of enhancing interest, expanding knowledge and science terminology. However, there are still some problems in the operation of the official account and the posts and functions need to be improved.

### **5. Conclusion and Prospect**

EEW is an online learning platform for energy English developed by the research group. The main learning content of EEW is terms, vocabulary, literature and popularization of science. As a supplement to the classroom teaching of energy English, EEW not only provides a new teaching method, but also gives a novel learning

experience to the students. The survey shows that the official account has had a positive effect on the knowledge foundation of the English learners in energy major, broadened their horizons, and promoted science knowledge. It helps to enhance students' ability of extracurricular autonomous learning, expand their knowledge and raise their learning interest, thus strengthening the effectiveness of classroom teaching and complementing each other with classroom teaching. In addition, the study also provides a real case and reference for other teams trying to create a WeChat admin platform supporting the classroom teaching.

The EEW designed and developed by the research group has complete basic functions, but it also has some shortcomings. For example, the published articles are relatively narrow, the typesetting is not exquisite enough, and the difficulty of materials is not classified. In order to better play the effect of the online learning platform of energy English in real life, the authors should further improve the platform .

## Acknowledgements

This paper is a phased achievement of the Innovation Training Project for College Students of China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing)( Project No. C201908790)

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