

Research on Realization of College Students' Individual Difference in English Teaching

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Abstract: *In recent years educational experts begin to recognize the importance of individual difference among every college student has an over-all development. However, the prerequisite to meet this goal is to recognize the individual difference of the college students. It is individual difference that plays an important part in language learning, especially in English learning because of its specialty and practicality. This paper analyzes the elements of individual difference among college students in English teaching and mainly discusses the solutions to realize and respect students' individual difference.*

Keywords: *Individual difference, personality, emotion, motivation and attitude*

1. Introduction

Individual difference, namely individuality, is often used to describe the uniqueness and irreplaceability of a person. Individual difference exists in English teaching and is divided into several parts, including: Intelligence, character, emotional element, motivation and attitude, which will influence English learning. The soul of English teaching is to cultivate and foster individual difference. Helping students form vivid resonance of their own is not only beneficial to their over-all development but also good to their foreign language learning.

2. Elements of individual difference

2.1 College students' age for English learning

Experience tells us that age plays an important part in language learning. [1] If a child misses some particular age, it will be difficult for him or her to speak his mother language. Let's take the wolf-child for example. This concept is named Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH, Lenneberg, 1967). Linguists have long been exploring when is the best time to learn a language. Childhood is widely accepted to be the best time to learn a language. However, adolescence is also regarded to be a good time to learn the second language. Most of the college school students' age is from 17 to 20, which is an important period. During this period, their self-consciousness, independent-consciousness and self-assessment become stronger and stronger, and their memory and intelligence get to the top of growth. They are also eager to learn all kinds of knowledge, including language learning. Hereby teachers should make good use of this period.

2.2 College school students' intelligence for English learning

Every individual is unique. One of the most important individual differences among students is their intelligence. Howard Gardner (1983, 1993) in his theory of multiple intelligences points out that people have different intelligences, therefore, it is unfair to treat them as the same. The intelligent theory thinks that human being has eight kinds of intelligence. Different intelligences exist in every student, which will influence his or her habit and action. Some people may not be good at one thing but can be talented in another. For example, some students are not good at talking, but good at independent thinking. Some students are not good at study, but they have good doing-ability. Some students are not good at math, but they can draw well. So different intelligence between students can give us some suggestions as follows:

- ① Different teaching methods should be adopted for students with different intelligence level.

②Communication-centered method is fit for common students, but language analysis-centered method is fit for the talented students.

So, teachers should realize the different intelligences college students have so that they would try different types of activities or teaching methods that cater of the different needs.

2.3 College school students' personality for English learning

Personality is an important factor, which affects learners' language acquisition. It was first introduced into educational field by Jung.[2] And it was classified into extroversion, and introversion. A person who possesses extroversion is called extrovert, and who possesses introversion is called introvert. Comparatively speaking, the introverts, namely shy persons, often feel uneasy and lack confidence in them. They believe that anything they say has to come out perfect, sterling, and supremely witty. They believe that every-body is watching and judging them. The following survey proves this:

64% of shy individuals view their shyness as a result of external factors beyond their control, such as early family experiences, overprotective parents or peer victimization.(Shyness: A Bold New Approach, Bernardo J. Carducci, Ph. D. Harper Collins,1999)

24% attribute shyness to internal factors within their control, such as interpersonal difficulties, like low self-esteem and high self-consciousness, or interpersonal difficulties like poor social skills and dating difficulties.(Shyness: A Bold New Approach, Bernardo J. Carducci, Ph. D. Harper Collins,1999)

62% experience feeling of shyness daily.(Shyness: A Bold New Approach, Bernardo J. Carducci, Ph. D. Harper Collins, 1999)

82% report shyness as an undesirable experience.(Shyness: A Bold New Approach, Bernardo J. Carducci, Ph. D. Harper Collins, 1999)

Students with different characters will also show their different attitude towards English learning. [3]The former, namely extrovert, hates unalterable teaching method and learning method. They do not like learning grammar or theory of one language for a long time. They are interested not only in the method they adopt, but also in the methods adopted by other students. They enjoy communicating with other people face to face. They are good at talkativeness and responsiveness. They are brave to take adventure. On the contrary, the latter, namely introvert, like alterable teaching method and learning method. They do not mind learning grammar or theory of one language for a long time. They are interested in the theory and they hope to gain the skills of language by independent thinking. They like communicating with others by writing instead of talking. They are always good at reading and writing in English. With the development of teaching, a lot of teachers think personality has something to do with English learning. The students who are self-confident, out-going, enthusiastic, talkative, communicative, responsible can learn English well. But students who are timid, cowardly, silent, careless, lack of self-confidence, nervous, not good at expressing themselves and so on, cannot study well. However, objectively, both of them have their own advantages and disadvantages. [5]Here, I can make a conclusion of extroverts and introverts about their main differences as following:

①Advantages of extremely extrovert: They have the benefit of communication, input and output accordingly. They practise a lot fluent oral English.

②Disadvantages of extremely extrovert: The extroverts are easily distracted and it is difficult for them to concentrate on language learning. They lack particular thinking of language forms and contents.

③Results of extremely extrovert: Language point is disorder, and not systematized for students. And the students are lack of deep understanding, restricted to the surface of language application

④Advantage of extremely introverts: The introverts have the benefit of careful consideration, and they are very good at grammar learning.

⑤Disadvantages of extremely introvert: The introverts are afraid to communicate, lack of input in real context. They have long thinking of language grammar, thus easily lose the chance of communication.

⑥Results of extremely introvert: The students are good at grammar and theory of a language, and but they are bad at oral English

Extroversion and introversion will not affect language achievement qualitatively but quantitatively. [5] Teachers should comply with learners' personalities and teach them according to their aptitudes. There are two ways: one is adopting teaching strategies according to the strength of their personalities and their preferred way of learning. The other is compensating the shortness of their personalities purposefully so as to improve the teaching quality.

2.4 College school students' emotion for English learning

Emotional aspects have been largely neglected and ignored in the past education. [6] Nowadays enough emphasis should be laid on the emotional factors to succeed in English teaching. Human has emotion, which is the experience of human's requirements, wish, concept, and concept in real life. Emotion and cognitive process are related closely. Cognitive process is the prerequisite and foundation of emotion. On the contrary, emotion will also affect cognitive process. Furthermore, good emotion will promote and organize cognitive process, but bad emotion will hinder the development of cognitive process. Once emotion is formed, it will be steady in a long time. Because of this reason, emotion will affect teaching in English learning.

A social and emotional approach that emphasizes positive behavior and attitudes can be a real turn-off for a negative thinker. Firstly, teachers' positive emotions should be cultivated to affect the learners. Once the teachers are in passive emotion or unhappy, the best textbook and the best teaching design will do nothing to teaching. So good emotion need to be adjusted before class. In class, teachers should show love to students, which will construct warm and harmonious atmosphere and shorten the distance between teachers and students as Chinese saying goes: love the teacher; believe his teaching. Secondly, the learners' good character should be fostered and the respect should be showed for the individual difference. Thirdly, the context should be created to arouse the learners' curiosity. Lastly, the learners' leaning interest should be developed and their positive emotion for learning should be set at rest. However, some researchers begin to concern this viewpoint: positive messages appear less believable and less sensible to unhappy people than sad messages do. They support that troubled students will be alienated by the insistent positive. There may be nothing wrong with such approaches, but they may not work. Thereby teachers should consider students' emotion to adjust their own emotion accordingly.

2.5 College school students' motivation and attitude for English learning

Attitude and motivation have been regarded as the most important factors affecting learning. [9] Motivation is defined as a reason or the knowledge of a reason for doing something. It is classified in to global motivation situational motivation, and task motivation for study. (Brown, 1981). Motivation will affect students' learning result by restricting students' positive study. If students have strong learning motivation, they will give whole-hearted devotion to study. On the contrary, if students are lack of learning motivation, they will be lack of warmth. Attitude is defined as a way of feeling, thinking, or behaving towards something or the position in which someone is tended or sitting. The learners' attitude to language learning is the learners' tendency of cognition, emotion, and behavior towards foreign language learning. Attitude and motivation in language learning have much in common and they are related closely. Most linguistics thinks that motivation comes from attitude. Attitude will not affect language learning directly. It will produce motivation. For example, if some students have favorable impression of other nations. They will be eager to know their lifestyle, history, culture and society. Thus, they will be willing to learn their language. That is good phenomenon for language learning. Appositively, if students look down upon on one country, we can imagine there is no motivation for him or her to lear its language. Whether language learners are interested in study material and the teaching design or not will also affect their attitude towards learning. Third, the motivation and attitude towards language learning will be changed by teachers' warmth, vivid action and erudite knowledge.

3. Setting about individual teaching

English individual teaching is needed urgently to adapt the individual difference among students. It is also a transformation compared the traditional English pattern of "teaching-centered" with "student-centered", and it respects the requirement and individual difference of students. The individual teaching can also create some environmental benefit for developing personality of students, which is quite meaningful for English learning. Here are some methods to take as following:

3.1 Opening wild horizons for students, cultivating pronounced interest in English for students

To meet this requirement, firstly, culture, history, tradition and local customs and practices of foreign countries should be introduced to students, which will add attraction to textbooks. Secondly, the teachers must make his lesson vivid and attractive, finding some material, which are close to students' life. For example, there is one passage named "city of hero" in high school students' textbook. Some experienced teachers will give the example of one famous movie "Hero" directed by Zhang yimou, to lead students to learn this passage.

3.2 Improving teachers' infectious emotion. Creating democratic and harmonious teaching atmosphere for students

An excellent English teacher is not only with solid language foundation but also with infectious emotion. In order to make the class active, teachers should be humorous, pay much more attention to students, choose some topics related to students and ask some imaginative questions. More chances should be given to students to express themselves.

3.3 Helping students erect self-confidence and self-assessment. Treating everyone equally

Because of intelligence and non-intelligence element, the students' ability of accepting a language will be different. So teachers must respect everyone's self-value, and encourage the backward students, who may be not self-confident or even doubt their learning ability. At this moment, teachers should be friendly and care much more of them and be tolerant enough to reduce their tension for them.

3.4 Appreciating students and stimulating them to show themselves from the bottom of their hearts. Cultivating their sense of achievement

English learning is a long and complicated process. It is very common for students to make some mistakes. Teachers should encourage them and help them keep learning instead of blaming them. In English teaching, some appreciative words or phrases such as "good", "great", "wonderful", "clever", "good job", "well done", "you did a good job" and so on, should be often used to show teachers' appreciation and definite assurance to students. The most important for English teachers is not making fun, nor even sneering at students when they cannot answer questions or cannot express themselves fluently in English, not giving the backward students or the introvert cold shoulder or treating them rudely.

3.5 Cultivating the students' automatically and creative ability of learning

If the students have automatically consciousness of learning, they will learn automatically.[8] English learning has its own rules. Hereby teachers should help students to master these rules and foster scientific methods. We can meet these demands in three ways as following:

3.5.1 Learning automatically before class

Students should have a basic understanding of the textbook such as its content and forms, be sure which new words need to be learned systematically, underline the useful and difficult sentences or phrases.

3.5.2 Learning automatically in class

Students should write down the important and difficult points, listen to the teachers carefully especially for some key words, follow teacher's instruction and think actively.

3.5.3 Learning automatically after class

English is not our mother language. We do not speak English in our daily life. So it is necessary for us to create some environment as much as possible. In order to improve English ability after class, students can buy some English magazines to read, listen to English songs and watch English movies in their spare time as possible as they can, which will be beneficial for their reading and listening comprehension. They must do as a saying goes: practice makes perfect.

4. Conclusion

By many examples above from different angles, the paper analyzes the elements of individual difference among students in English teaching and mainly discusses the solutions to realize and respect students' individual difference. The study of individual difference among students in English teaching is a large academic problem, which needs more complicated and complete research. It is impossible to deal with such a complex topic completed in my paper. I just hope this paper can guide more English learners to explore, make good use of students' individual difference to supervise English teaching in future.

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