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Deepening the Reform of College English Classroom Teaching-Exploration of Hierarchical Teaching in Class—Take Qingdao Huanghai University for Example

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ABSTRACT

In the era of knowledge economy, the key is to cultivate talents with comprehensive quality. It's known that people's qualities are identical and different. Only by making full use of people's differences, can we cultivate outstanding talents who conform to social development. Class hierarchical teaching as a new teaching mode, breaks the traditional class teaching mode, to a certain extent, in line with the requirements of quality education. Based on the college English situation of the students in the school where I'm teaching, this paper attempts to explore the hierarchical teaching of College English in class.

1. Introduction

Times are changing, students' situation is changing, there is no fixed method of teaching, and many years of teaching experience cannot be directly transferred to the classroom. By understanding the classes of different majors or parallel classes of the same major, students in each class have a very different English foundation. If we take the overall situation into consideration, regardless of students' differences, we will make the students with good foundation feel that the content of the classroom cannot meet their needs, and make the students with weak foundation gain nothing in the classroom. As time passes, this course will be abandoned. Therefore, it is

necessary to try the hierarchical teaching in class.

2. The Theoretical Basis of Hierarchical Teaching in Class

2.1 Principle of Teaching Students in Accordance with Their Aptitude

In China, Confucius began to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, while Zhu Xi (a famous Neo-Confucianist, thinker, philosopher, educator and poet in Song Dynasty), as an educational requirement, summed up Confucius' different educational methods with "Confucius teaches students in accordance with their aptitude". Lu Jiuyuan, an educationist in the Southern Song Dynasty,

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Xiumin Han (1978-),

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said, "People have different talents, and we should bring their advantages into full play"^[1] In the fourth guideline of the Ten Guidelines for Professional Behavior of College Teachers in the New Era, it is mentioned that "With the moral growth of students in mind, we are fully committed to the mission in the cultivation of the intellectual development and moral integrity of students in teaching process, which benefits students and teachers alike. We are determined to follow the intrinsic law of education as well as that of students' development through individualizing our instructions."^[2] Teaching in accordance with one's aptitude is always an important teaching method in teaching. Teachers should select appropriate learning methods for each student according to their cognitive level, learning ability and self-quality. Only by giving full play to their strengths, making up for their shortcomings, stimulating their interest in learning, building up their confidence in learning, and improving their enthusiasm to participate in the learning process in the classroom, can the teaching quality be greatly improved.

2.2 Zone of Proximal Development

The principle of the zone of proximal development was put forward by Vygotsky, a psychologist of the Soviet Union from the perspective of psychology. The theory holds that students have two levels, namely, the level of development they have reached and the level of development they may reach. The distance between the two levels is the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is the difference between the level of problem solving that students can achieve with the help of others and the level of problem solving alone under the guidance of students. Teachers should find the student's "zone of proximal development". They should set different teaching goals for students of different foundations, so that each student has its own "zone of proximal development". With personal help and efforts, they can enjoy the happiness brought by learning progress, encourage themselves with their own continuous progress and give full play to their "Internal Drive" of seeking knowledge (Internal drive is the primary factor in a person's success).

2.3 Humanistic Theory

Humanistic theory rose in the United States in the 1950s-1960s and developed rapidly in the 1970s-1980s. Its main representatives were Maslow (1908-1970) and Rogers (1902-1987). Maslow proposed that human needs should be developed in different levels. Rogers believed that human beings had a natural "self-realization" motive, that is, a person's tendency to develop, expand and ma-

ture, which is a tendency for a person to maximize his or her various potentials. He believed that the main task of the teacher was to provide students with learning methods so that students can decide how to learn according to their own situation. This theory pays attention not only to the development of cognition in teaching, but also to the law of development of students' emotion, interest and motivation in teaching, which lays a theoretical foundation for the hierarchical teaching in the class.

3. Analysis of Class Situation

3.1 Great Differences in Students' Basic Knowledge

When students enter school, their English foundation is uneven and even polarized. In classes, from the student's point of view, it can play the role of "transmission and guidance", but from the point of view of class, students with different foundations are divided into the same class, teachers teach the same content in class, some students think that it is too easy to learn what they want to learn, and some students think that it is too difficult to understand. This poses a great challenge to the improvement of teaching quality and effect in College English classroom teaching.

3.2 The Form of Teaching and Examination Is Unified

Teachers are required to complete the teaching tasks specified in the syllabus within given class hours every semester. No matter what the English foundation of the class is, or why the class is delayed during the semester, the teachers must finish them by the end of the semester. Therefore, most teachers have no alternative but to adopt "duck-stuffing" teaching method to complete the teaching tasks in the classroom. By the end of the semester, what students are waiting for is a unified final examination paper which cannot take into account the students with weak foundation and even those with zero English foundation who have to take part in the unified final examination paper at the end of the semester, which means that It's impossible for zero-based students to pass the exam at all.

3.3 Classroom Activities Cannot Take into Account Students with Weak Foundation

Students' active participation in the classroom is an important part of teaching. In order to enable more students to participate in the classroom activities, the teachers tried every possible way, such as group discussion, free speech and so on. In this semester, in order to improve their inter-

est in learning English through encouraging more students to speak actively and boldly in class, I adopted a plus-point system, that is, students' classroom performance is directly linked to their daily performance. But at the end of the semester, I found that there were several students in each class, more than 10 students, who did not participate in classroom activities once in this whole semester. Some students never take an active part in the classroom activities, which deserves our teachers' reflection. What is it that keeps them from participating in classroom activities and what are they doing in English class? Teachers' duty is to care for every student so that he can gain and develop through classroom learning.

3.4 Limitation of Grading the Students of the College

In order to contributing to improving the quality of English teaching, we stratified the students in our school. The students in a teaching class have almost the same English foundation, which is convenient to teach and organize classroom activities and so on. In order to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm, the classroom management was set as dynamic management, in which students can jump from the bottom level to the top level according to their own learning situation. But it brings great inconvenience to the classroom management. In each class, many teachers need to communicate in real time, paying attention to the students' whereabouts, and the list on the class attendance sheet needs real-time updating. The number of students attending this class today is 45 and tomorrow may be 50 or 38, which requires teachers to focus on a variable number of the students in real time. At the same time, It brings a lot of inconvenience for teachers to understand students and their performance evaluation in peacetime because of the changing class size. In addition, students have been organized into fixed classes according to their majors at the beginning of their enrollment. The number of classes in the educational administration system is fixed. The number of College English final examinations is chaotic because the students from different majors are mixed together, which brings great trouble to the entry of final grades into the educational administration system.

4. Specific Measures for Implementing Hierarchical Teaching in Class

Based on the above situation, it is preferable to carry out hierarchical teaching in class, which can be carried out from the following aspects:

4.1 Student Hierarchy

The implicit differences of students' English should be reflected in hierarchy. The teachers can communicate with students and their head teacher to understand students themselves as well as other students' personalities, English foundation, the situation of English learning and the demand for English ability. In this way, the students are divided into low-level, medium level and high level. However, teachers are required to lay students in their minds according to the students' situation, not to speak out; otherwise, students with weak English foundation will be labeled "negative" so that they will have inferiority complex. In addition, hierarchy is not absolute, not once the students are divided to a certain level, to which they always belong this semester or even a school year. If the students study hard in a period of time, they have make a great progress and can apply for the level of promotion, on the contrary, they may be lowered a level, so that the students of different levels can have a sense of crisis and motivation to learn. In fact, this is also a way to encourage students to make a progress. In addition, teachers should conscientiously understand the spirit of the Ten Guidelines for Professional Behavior of College Teachers in the New Era. The fifth guideline mentions "Care about the students with love and strictness, be tireless in teaching, be a good teacher and friend, love the students sincerely and be strict with the students."^[3] Teachers should care about and love every student, respect every student and establish a good teacher-student relationship. This is the premise for students to learn the course well, and also the basic guarantee for the implementation of hierarchical class teaching.

4.2 Hierarchical Teaching Objectives

Before setting teaching goals for students at different levels, teachers should first understand their characteristics. Based on my teaching experience for many years, most of the students with weak English foundation are lively, intelligent and have great potential, but not interested in English learning. They cannot understand in class and not care about the final exam, too. For students at this level, the key is to understand what they are interested in and how to gradually transfer their interest to English learning. The teacher should encourage them to finish the assignment which is easy and appropriate after class. Besides, the teacher often chat with them in free time, discussing about common interests, ideals, English to their help in the future and so on, closing up with them to become friends in their study, so that they will realize the importance of the course you teach and enjoy it. The Middle-level students have a certain foundation in English. They feel that

they can pass the final exam if they spend some time on English. They are not very clear about the requirements of English, too. For their learning enthusiasm is general, they no longer spend time and energy to learn after class. But as long as teachers give them a hand, they can learn actively. So teachers should encourage them to understand their purpose in English learning, and give them some guidance on learning methods, so that they can complete the medium-difficulty learning tasks and assignments on time. Higher-level students have independent research hobbies and strong self-learning ability. They have clear learning objectives and know what to learn and how to learn. Teachers' main task is to ask them to understand the knowledge from text book and flexibly use it. Teachers can arrange some open questions for discussion in groups. Each group writes a summary, shares the results in class. This makes them realize that there is no end to learning and exploratory learning is full of infinite fun. Taking Unit 6 Aging Society of 21st Century College English Applied Comprehensive Course III for example, teaching objectives can be set at different levels: low-level students only need to understand the main idea of the text, find the basis for the problems in the text and complete some exercises under the guidance of teachers. Of course, some who are good at performance can also be encouraged to make up a scene performance in groups, teachers give a lot of information tips; Middle-level students, in addition to complete some exercises from the text book, are required to make up a scene performance in groups combining with the teaching content, teachers also need to give some information tips; For high-level students, it is easy for them to finish the exercises from the text book by self-taught, teachers can ask them to act as small journalists to interview the nursing home and record their own experience. In this way, students at different levels can get different gains through classroom learning.

4.3 Stratification of Teaching Process

In the process of hierarchical teaching, the teaching process is relatively complicated, involving many aspects such as classroom, assignment, testing and so on.

4.3.1 Class Process Stratification

In the course of classroom teaching, the content is taught in an all-round way, but for different levels of students, teachers should set different questions or different methods of asking the same question, moreover, take into account the actual understanding ability and acceptance ability of students at each level. For example, when discussing the exercises about reading comprehension, the

students in the class can discuss in groups combined freely. But teachers can ask students at different levels in slightly different ways. When asking middle and low-level students, teachers can ask "In which paragraph can you find the relevant information about this question, can you stand up to read for us?" When asking high-level students, teachers can directly ask "Can you answer this question in your own words according to the text?" Through group discussion, students will not be aware of the hierarchy in answering questions, on the contrary, they are actively involved in problem discussion and thinking. About Summing-up on Teaching, in the past, teachers always gave brief summary at the end of the class. After stratified teaching in class, teachers can make students at the same level discuss and summarize what they have learned from this class and let them share the lessons in the order of low-medium-high, teachers give final comments and supplements. In this way, students at different levels can participate in the whole classroom teaching process and taste the sweetness from it.

4.3.2 Layering of Assignment

Homework is an important part of checking students' mastery of classroom knowledge. However, in the past, homework was unified for the whole class. Students with weak foundations copied other students' homework just to finish the task rigidly without any improvement. In order to enable students at different levels to test their mastery of classroom knowledge by doing homework, teachers choose homework that conforms to the actual situation of students at different levels, which is divided into three levels: simple, medium and difficult. The number of the topics at each level is the same. When arranging, teachers tell students that they can choose and complete one third of the topics. They must complete one third of the topics to meet the prescribed requirements and ensure a higher accuracy to complete within the specified time and submit on time. In this way, although homework reflects levels, students are not aware of it. Students can also be encouraged to discuss more difficult topics in groups, because the process of discussion is also the process of acquiring knowledge.

4.3.3 Exam Stratification

English teachers have always use the same set of papers for all majors college English final exam in the whole school without taking into account the fact that the students of different majors differ greatly in English foundation, different students in the same class also have a great difference in their English foundation. Those who have a

good English foundation can take more than 90 scores in the exams, while those who have a weak English foundation only get 20 scores or even less, as a result, a large percent of the students fail in the exam and only take a large-scale supplementary exam next semester. However, students with weak or even zero foundations still fail and only wait till they graduate to take the last clean-up exam. I have participated in the invigilation work of clean-up exam, unexpectedly; a few students took part in supplementary examination of college English of four semesters. Later, I learned that the students' English foundation was almost zero, and they didn't understand anything in his English class, two-year college English time was wasted in vain. After the examination is stratified, the final examination is flexible, and the proportion of the usual results is increased. The purpose is to let more students participate in classroom learning and pay attention to the learning process. Adjusting the proportion of difficult and easy content of the test paper, teachers can increase the proportion of basic content to account for about 50%, and the proportion of medium and above difficult content is about 50%, additional contents with certain difficulty (set as extra marks) can be added so that the low-level students can pass finishing the basic and medium questions. Teachers should encourage students to choose additional questions. In this way, we cannot only ensure the passing rate of low-level students, but also can improve the ability of medium and high-level students.^[4]

5. Conclusion

Combining with the students' real situation, teachers

research and implement hierarchical teaching in class is conducive to students' own development because students at different levels can make continuous progress in the same classroom and experience the joy of success. Teachers should reform and innovate teaching methods to further enrich teaching experience in light of students' actual situation and development law. But in the process of concrete implementation, new problems will arise, which need teachers to explore and reflect on the way of classroom teaching methods.

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