

Thinking and Exploration of English Education for the Blind

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Abstract: With the development of society, English as an important language carrier and communication subject is more and more important. To popularize English among the blind students is the need of modern society. In order to make the blind more able to adapt to the social development, more attention should be paid to English education for blind students. This paper analyzes English education for blind students from the perspective of actual learning effects and English teaching methods.

Keywords: Teaching Strategy; English Education; English Teaching for the Blind

Introduction

According to the data of the seventh census, China's population has exceeded 1.4 billion, and the total number of disabled people accounts for 10 percent, among which the number of blind people exceeds 17.3 million. For the blind, education and employment are important issues that cannot be ignored.

In recent years, we have made a lot of efforts in the implementation of education for the blind. We have established learning resource centers to provide different kinds of support for the blind, so that they can learn various professional knowledge and skills suitable for their development and needs just like able-bodied students. Nowadays, English, as one of the most important information carriers, has become an international language. Popularizing English among blind students is the need of improving the civilized degree of modern society. In order to make the blind more adaptable to social development, English education is vital.

1. Current Situation and Problems of English Education for the Blind

To carry out English teaching in schools for the blind, we should first understand the actual situation of them. According to the investigation and analysis, the blind students mainly have the following problems in English learning:

Blind students have a certain prejudice to English and their enthusiasm for learning English is not high. For the blind, normal employment and life are very important, so it seems more beneficial to master some practical skills, such as massage techniques, than learning English.

Blind students have a weak foundation of English. For some blind students, they already have had a certain English foundation. However, there are still some students with primary school education level without contact with English. What's worse, they even don't recognize 26 English letters.

There is a shortage of digital resource on English. In 2017, the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China and other five departments launched the "Digital Reading Promotion Project for the Blind" to provide digital audio books to the blind through digital publishing platforms. This shows that education for the blind is getting more and more attention from the government. However, the number of blind people is simultaneously rising, which makes the education of the blind more thorny. The number of books published each year for the blind is limited. Audio materials in foreign languages in particular are extremely scarce.

2. Thinking on English Teaching Strategies for the Blind

The former Soviet union educator Vygotsky's research attests that every student's development has two levels: one is the level that has been achieved; the other is the one that is potential. This cognition is called "zone of proximal development theory", in which the distance between the two levels is called "zone of proximal development" or "zone of optimal

development". "Zone of possible development" specifically refers to the continuous development of individually negative adaptation to nature psychological abilities (sensory perception, involuntary attention, image memory, etc.). On the basis of "students' existing level of independent problem solving", it helps students form more advanced and complex cognitive functions, so as to explore their potential level of development. And teaching, only from individual differences to draw up stratified teaching methods and plans, can better promote the development of students.

As for the exploration of teaching, Bloom also explained it in his "Mastery Learning Theory" in which he emphasized that as long as proper attention is paid to the main variables in teaching, it is possible to make the majority of students reach the mastery level. So what are these variables? They are student's learning condition, learning ability and learning motivation. For blind people, their ability of English writing is very low due to visual loss. But as a compensating characteristic for physical defects, their hearing is more sensitive. In this case, teachers should make corresponding teaching plans and strategies according to the specific situation of the blind students, such as taking advantage of their hearing and touch to impart knowledge.

For students, interest is always the best teacher. Hence, it is essential for teachers to focus on cultivating students' interest. In this process, first of all, teachers should make full preparation and let students like and fully accept themselves, so that students will be interested in what they teach. Secondly, teachers should set up an diverting atmosphere of class and pay attention to the vividness of teaching. In the age of information, students no longer just play the role of audience, which demands teachers combine teaching and students' learning as well as dealing with these two relations well, in order to find the teaching methods that suit the students. For example, let students be teachers, talk to each other, say tongue twisters, tell stories, perform and so on.

3. Exploration of English Teaching for the Blind

For English teaching, some schools for the blind have carried out and made positive attempts. For example, Shaanxi Ziqiang Secondary Professional School has compiled school-based textbooks suitable for blind massage students, which enhances the practicability and pertinence of English teaching and improves students' enthusiasm in learning English.

However, there is still a long way to go in teaching English for the blind. It is necessary to try more new teaching methods based on students' situation, such as the following ones:

Teachers ought to create a teaching environment suitable for students to learn and act as "guides". Before class, they can guide the blind students to have a purposeful preview. In class, the blind students are consciously guided by teachers to use hearing and touch and give play to their advantages in memory to memorize knowledge. After class, also as a guide, teachers should lead the students to take the initiative to review and make a summary.

Teachers should follow the cognitive rules of blind students, consciously help them overcome physical and psychological obstacles, and form their own learning strategies. In the teaching, teachers should constantly stimulate and strengthen the blind students' interest in learning in order to help them establish self-confidence and the will to overcome difficulties.

Develop a "layered teaching" plan. Stratified teaching means that teachers divide students into scientific groups according to their existing knowledge, different ability levels and potentials, making learning objectives and plans respectively, so as to promote students to get the best learning effect in the interaction. For example, teachers can classify the words in advance according to the degree of difficulty. All students are required to recite the simple words such as "day" and "sun"; be familiar with words like "shambles" and "retribution" which are difficult for them to read and remember.

Organize regular role-play activities with English professionals and enthusiasts. On account of English as a language carrier to serve for communication, paying attention to practice is also of great significance. Learning English, to a great extent, serves for employment and life. Thus, in the teaching process, teachers can set up training of simulated scenes, so that blind students learn knowledge in practice, and put the theory into practice.

Teach with physical objects. *Curriculum Standards* suggests teachers to use visual teaching means to make up for the blind visual defects. For example, when teaching the word "lollipop", teachers can hand out a lollipop to each student to let them feel it and then memorize; as for the word "Bump", teachers can allow students to gently bump into each other and experience this movement to deepen their understanding of this word.

Make the best of audio digital books. In order to avoid the blind students in the learning process from feeling boring and reducing the efficiency of learning, teachers should make full use of digital teaching materials such as audio books, and appropriately add humorous stories, music, interviews and other audio materials in the class. In this way, blind students can not only effectively relax but also improve their interest in learning.

Conclusion

Education is to help blind students have a better employment and life. The purpose of the school for the blind is to cultivate them rather than adopt them. It is committed to helping the blind to achieve a perfect state of independent life. As an important language, English is vital to interpersonal communication, especially external exchange. The purpose of learning English is to assist the blind to get a better job or further study. Therefore, practicability is a crucial target of English teaching for them. When making teaching plans, teachers should not only focus on the explanation of basic knowledge and lay a good foundation for students, but also improve students' ability of applying English in work and daily life.

Disability is not frightful, but people's prejudice. For the blind, although congenital conditions are not as good as ordinary people, their enthusiasm for learning and ability are indeed unlimited. They should never be deprived of their right to try and explore. The whole society should also work together to provide more platforms for them to learn and compete fairly, so that they will not be discriminated against or treated in a special way.

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