

Learning Styles and Corresponding Teaching Strategies for Non-English Majors in China Universities

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Abstract: English language, being a tool for communication, has played a vital role in both social life and academic fields. Based on this situation, developing teaching strategies and improving teaching effects are critical challenges that all English teachers are facing in China. Regarding this problem, studies show that English teachers need to have a further exploration on student's learning styles and set up relevant teaching strategies to improve the actual learning outcomes of those college non-English majors. This study analyzes students' learning styles and suggests corresponding teaching strategies implemented by the teachers for non-English majors. Besides, by synthesizing the concerned information, this study also put forward some teaching suggestions aiming to enhance English teaching strategies for non-English majors; therefore, the learning outcome may get improved correspondingly. Additionally, the study provides references for the enhancement of the comprehensive level of English teaching professionals in China.

Keywords: Higher Education; Non-English Majors; Learning Style; Teaching Strategy

It is of great significance and value to enhance English teaching skills and strategies, as it is one of the contributors to foster student's English ability ^[1]. In this study, in order to achieve the goal of improving student's English skill and ability, the researcher conducted a survey which is followed by interviews aiming at non-English majors in some universities in China. Literally, it tends to make an in-depth exploration and analysis on learning styles and corresponding teaching strategies among the targeted population. This study strove to shed insight into the effective ways to help students solve the difficulties when learning English based on their learning styles. Therefore, the corresponding suggestions on teaching strategies were given in the hope that this may guide teachers to improve their English teaching, which may result in the comprehensive improvement of English learners' learning outcome.[2].

1. Learning styles of non-English majors

In light of the previous researches, it is pointed out that English teachers, should analyze and evaluate student's learning styles in order to effectively improve the learner's ability to acquire knowledge. Hence, teachers should also make corresponding adjustments and corrections based on the actual situation of student's learning styles, which may lay a solid foundation for the overall improvement of student's English ability. This study takes non-English majors as research object and their types of learning styles are confirmed beforehand. There are divergent measurements for the cognition of learning styles, among which, David Kolb's theory of learning style receives widely recognition and prevails in the research field. In accordance with David Kolb, learning styles can be divided into four categories: converging, diverging, assimilating and accommodating. The learning styles of non-English majors are characterized by the following features.

1.1 The converging

These converging students are good at exploring relevant knowledge through practice in the process of English

learning. They can often effectively apply theory into practice and find solution to specific problems^[3]. Meanwhile, they have excellent deductive reasoning skills. However, their drawbacks lie in the fact that when they solve problems, their decisions are often made hastily without details, causing a negative impact on learning.

1.2 The diverging

These diverging students have advantages in active thinking. They can often effectively realize diversified exploration of knowledge by combining relevant issues effectively and developing reasonable associations^[4]. However, the disadvantage of this type of students is that it is difficult for them to make corresponding choice in time when they face with multiple choices, which is not conducive for them to grasp the opportunities and improve their English learning.

1.3 The assimilating

When learning English knowledge, students with this learning style are good at making learning plans, reflecting and analyzing existing knowledge. Besides, as assimilators, they are good at responding to organized and logical information. However, they lack awareness of practicing knowledge, which is not conducive to the effective implementation of plans^[5].

1.4 The accommodating

Generally, the accommodating students are good at adjusting and improving their learning methods in time according to what they have been taught. Therefore, they tend to have strong adaptability in learning English knowledge^[6]. However, they often make a lot of insignificant reforms in the process of learning and exploring knowledge, which leads to a time-consuming delay of the plans. In this way, it is not conducive for the accommodators to promote and optimize their learning efficacy in English.

2. Teaching strategies based on divergent learning styles

In English teaching, guiding students with different learning styles to effectively improve their English ability, English teachers should make appropriate adjustments to their teaching strategies and contents based on the objective identification of students' learning styles. In this manner, it may fully mobilize students' subjective initiative, and then lay a solid foundation for the establishment and improvement of efficient English classes in universities.

2.1 Teaching strategies for the converger

For non-English majors belonging to convergers, in the process of English teaching, teachers should positively guide them to think effectively and carefully. In addition, convergers are suggested to consider the possible consequences before taking action in order to avoid making decisions in haste. In terms of specific practices, teachers should guide convergers to review English vocabulary and grammar regularly. In this way, they may achieve the purpose to acquire new information based on what they have learnt previously. Empirical researches showed that teachers can help convergers further cultivate their patience, which may maximize their learning outcomes.

2.2 Teaching strategies for the diverger

During English teaching, teachers need to pay more attention to the cultivation of decision-making awareness of divergers, in order to improve student's knowledge mastery. This may help students effectively and objectively evaluate relevant choices in a short time, ensuring they can grasp opportunities in time. In addition, teachers should guide divergers to control their imagination gradually by cultivating student's decision-making ability in the face of choices, which plays a positive role in promoting their English learning efficacy.

2.3 Teaching strategies for the assimilator

In order to help assimilators consolidate their English knowledge, teachers should help them to fully consider the feasibility of learning and avoid unpractical and unreliable plan-makings as much as possible. Teachers should also

focus on the application of systematic teaching skills, guiding and helping them to have a deeper understanding of what they have been taught ^[7]. For example, when learning English grammar and tense, teachers can assign students to write essays in English, practicing the concerned knowledge, such as present perfect tense, future continuous tense, object clause, attributive clause and predicative clause. This may enable students to fully understand English knowledge in the writing process.

2.4 Teaching strategies for the accommodator

In order to help accommodators to improve their English ability, teachers should actively provide scientific guidance to students while teaching. Teachers are supposed to guide accommodators to be more pragmatic and avoid searching meaningless faults. In this way, teachers may assist accommodators to learn knowledge more effectively. Meanwhile, it is more effective for accommodators to practice what they have learnt and avoid related learning assignment deviating from the expected goal. In terms of specific practice, teachers should give pertinent and timely evaluation to the meaningless implementation of learning methods that students tried during their learning. This may help accommodators further understand what is of no practical meaning and then help them learn to cultivate their knowledge in a down-to-earth manner.

3. Conclusions

For the purpose of improvement of learning outcome, educators should work out teaching strategies for individuals according to student's different learning styles. This may lay a solid foundation for the improvement of student's English ability, especially, non-English majors. David Kolb's experiential learning theory and the classification of learning style provide us a more scientific measurement by dividing learning styles into four categories: converging, diverging, assimilating and accommodating, depicting learners' learning tendencies objectively. Researches show that English teachers may effectively diversify their teaching strategies by identifying the characteristics of students' different learning styles. This provides a conducive reference for teachers to adjust their teaching strategies, with the expectation to meet the demands of students with different learning styles during their English learning. In conclusion, the identification of learning style and its corresponding adjustment towards teaching strategies are vital significance for the improvement of English ability of non-English majors in China's universities.

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