Strategy Study on Higher Vocational College Students’ Confidence in English Learning

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Abstract: In the current vocational colleges, students generally lack self-confidence due to various reasons such as social cognition and self-cognition. At the same time, in the process of English teaching, the influence of students' emotional factors on English learning is often ignored. This article first elaborates the status and importance of higher vocational colleges, then analyzes the reasons that influence the vocational college students on lacking confidence, next based on the relevant research theories referring to language learning, emotional factors and confidence at home and abroad, combining with the actual situations in higher vocational colleges, lastly puts forward the relevant suggestions on how to enhance students’ confidence, so as to make the English teachers in teaching to pay attention to students’ self-confidence, help students improve self-confidence to achieve the better teaching effect.

Current Situations in Higher Vocational Colleges

In reality, it is an indisputable fact that the group of higher vocational education has not received the deserving attention and respect. In fact, the national policy on the orientation of higher vocational education is very clear, compared with general higher education to cultivate academic talents, higher vocational education focuses on the training of higher technical application-oriented talents, the purpose of higher vocational colleges is to cultivate technical talents with some certain management experiences. Therefore, higher vocational colleges are one of the important types of higher education and an important part of China's vocational education, which shoulder the important mission of cultivating national talents.

Current Situations of Students in Higher Vocational Colleges

From the above definitions and orientations, the higher vocational colleges belong to the category of higher education, which is also an important part of higher education, but the fact is, under Chinese traditional concepts in the process of a few thousand years, even there are diversity ideas in today's society, people still regard first-class as academic talents, skilled talents as an inferior, and the social understanding on the higher vocational education is not real a comprehensive, in some sense, higher vocational education cannot be divided into the category of higher education, and even higher vocational education is narrowly defined as a low level, low grade, even within the scope of low quality, thus the result is that higher vocational college students has been treated by the tinted spectacles. These factors, such as the social cognitive bias and discrimination, have a great impact on the students’ study in higher vocational colleges. Both the society and students themselves think that choosing higher vocational colleges because of the low scores in college entrance examination is a failure and a last choice. The higher vocational students cannot accept the fact emotionally. And they are affected by the surrounding environment so that they doubt themselves and deny themselves, their self-confidence gradually decreases, the result is to influence on their study and life in college.
English Learning Situations in Higher Vocational Colleges

Reseaching the English learning situation of higher vocational students, in the survey of students in higher vocational colleges over years, for the most students, English is their weak subject, which is also the reason why the higher vocational students do not take CET-4 and CET-6 exams but take English Application Level Test that is commonly known as English Level 3 Test. In view of this fact, the higher vocational English teachers are facing with the great teaching pressures and challenges. However, in the current English teaching, teachers often pay attention to the cognitive factors of English learning but ignore the influence of emotional factors on English learning, and separate the cognitive from the emotional factors.

In fact, from the above analyses, it is not difficult to find that higher vocational college students lack confidence in learning, so facing to the weak subjects—English, they show the less confidence, the fearing emotions are more serious. Therefore, if English teachers separate cognition from emotion in teaching, or only teach English as the whole teaching content but completely ignore the emotional factors of students, it is hard to imagine that teachers will achieve the good teaching results and students can acquire the teaching content taught by teachers.

Relevant Research Overviews at Home and Abroad

On emotion and language learning, theoretically, in terms of the relevant research overview at home and abroad, people have been paying close attention to emotion problems in language learning for a long time. In the 1960s, the theory on the relationship between emotional factors and language learning has been put forward by Erikson, Maslow and Rogers who represented western humanistic psychologists provided the beneficial enlightenment for foreign language teaching. Humanistic psychology believes, in order to achieve the set goals, that education must unify the two aspects of cognition and emotion (Shu Pan, 2003). The domestic researches on the emotional problems in language teaching began in the 1980s such as "the influence of emotional factors on college English teaching" (Maoying Xiang, 2003). Then, among all the emotional factors that affect language learning, the author believes that self-confidence is the most important one for the higher vocational students.

In order to prove the importance of self-confidence in language learning, it is necessary to understand the relevant researches on self-confidence at home and abroad. The word "confidence" in English originates from the Latin "confidential", which means "trust", "the state of feeling confident", while "self-confidence" is "an emotion or consciousness in which an individual trusts himself or his situation". There are many definitions of self-confidence. Different researchers have different understandings of confidence and different definitions. For example, humanistic psychologist Maslow (1943) first described that self-confidence was an emotional experience when self-esteem needed to be satisfied in his need hierarchy theory, and Branden (1988) believed that self-confidence was an individual's sense of self-competence and value. Domestic researchers also have many definitions about self-confidence. For instance, Wenbo Che (1985) thought that self-confidence was an individual's self-intention to believe in his ability and energy, and psychologist Dr. Li-ping Che, after researching the definitions of confidence at home and abroad, tentatively reviewed self-confidence can be regarded as a multi-dimensional integration of complex system which contains some factors such as its self-cognition and evaluation, emotional experience, etc.

Strategy Suggestions to Improve Students’ Confidence

Returning to higher vocational colleges from the theoretical bases, it has been discussed above that students in higher vocational colleges lack confidence due to the factors as internal and external cognition, especially in weak subject—English. Throughout our country, there are so many researches about the influence of emotional factors on the college students' language learning, but at present, for the higher vocational college students who are still treated unfairly from the social
prejudice view, the researches for their emotion and language acquisition are rare, so this itself reflects the overall environment neglecting higher vocational colleges. The author thinks that study about the influence of higher vocational college students' self-confidence on language learning is urgent and significant. The higher vocational college English teachers in teaching should pay much more attention to students' confidence, help students to remove the obstacles affecting confidence, stimulate students' learning enthusiasm so that students can enhance confidence in effective English learning to improve English in the process of building confidence, at last, students can promote the healthy development of their personality and achieve the progress of learning English as well.

In the many questionnaires conducted by the author's higher vocational college, students pay close attention to teachers' attitudes, and they generally feedback that they prefer teachers' classes with the positive emotions. For example, in the evaluation on teachers from students in each semester, in terms of teaching attitudes, students give the higher marks to teachers who take active class atmosphere, stimulate and encourage students' learning passion, correspondingly they make the higher marks to teachers in terms of teaching level. In terms of the summary of comments, students are very positive about the enthusiastic teachers in class, while they are more negative and give their suggestions for the class that lacks interaction between teachers and students. Since self-confidence is a particularly important factor in English learning of higher vocational college students and an important aspect of promoting foreign language learning, teachers properly integrate emotional factors into English teaching to cultivate students' self-confidence instead of attaching importance to cognition rather than emotion. So how can English teachers in higher vocational colleges cultivate students' confidence in teaching? The following are some suggestions for the higher vocational English teachers to integrate emotional factors into teaching so as to enhance students' self-confidence:

**Having a Good First Class**

A good first class is very important to actively resolve the unfavorably internal and external cognitive evaluation on higher vocational college students and build up their self-confidence. The position, function and role of higher vocational education have been illustrated in the above from the national level, for the most higher vocational college students who are at the beginning of enrolling into college, it is normal that they do not clearly know the national policies and documents about higher vocational education. So in the first class of foreign language teaching, the foreign language teachers need not illustrate in a rush the importance of foreign language learning, in fact, students' English is a weak link, the more teachers emphasize on the importance of foreign language, the less students will have self-confidence. Therefore, in the first class, the foreign language teachers should explain the orientation, function and status of higher vocational education to students, and tell them that higher vocational education is not only an important and indispensable part of higher education but also the backbone of national and social development. Teachers are the spokesmen of the social mainstream thoughts, and their high recognition and praise for higher vocational education can largely dissolve students' negative emotions, re-establish students' confidence lacking in the college entrance examination so that students can affirm themselves and actively participate in class learning.

**Creating a Good Class Atmosphere**

Teachers should create a good class atmosphere and language learning environment to help students reduce pressure and improve their self-confidence. In English class, teachers should try their best to create a relaxed and pleasant class atmosphere, effectively use teaching language so that students do not think their English is poor, easily participate into the class, and keep up with the pace of the teacher's teaching. In addition, teachers should ask questions skillfully to fully reflect the teaching method of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, for example, questions with different levels of difficulty can be answered by students who have the different study levels and personalities. After students answer questions, teachers should make timely comment and give priority to affirmations so that students can feel the sense of achievement in participating interaction in the class, to acquire confidence in learning. Teachers can also assist class teaching through body
language, gestures and eyes communication, etc., to create a harmonious class atmosphere so that students have emotional resonance, in the intangibly and tangibly various effective class communication to enhance self-confidence, in real they can benefit from every lesson.

**Cultivating Students’ Correct Learning Motivation**

It is necessary to cultivate students' correct learning motivation and stimulate their interest in learning so that they can be confident in facing difficulties in learning and willing to take the initiative to learn English. Teachers should tell students that the goal of learning English is not only for passing English level tests to get certificates, or to find a good job after graduation, but because English as a language is a tool that is widely used in real life. Mastering the tool well, they can effectively communicate, enrich life, broaden the horizons, to some broad range, they can put up a bridge to the world in English. Of course, if teachers, facing to students with weak foundation, only tell them the meaning of learning English well, even if students have the motivation to learn, they will not be interested because the learning content is difficult. Therefore, teachers should teach from easy to difficult, promote class content step by step, for instance, the selection of the textbook difficulty should be based on students’ normal level, the questions can be answered as far as possible students can, the assignments are closely related to the class teaching, the examination papers and tests can let students get the higher scores, etc. Through these methods, students have the pride of being able to master English learning so that their interest can be stimulated, confidence is subtly formed, learning English will be developed well.

**Protecting Students' Dignity and Self-confidence**

Teachers should safeguard students’ dignity, appreciate students and protect students’ self-confidence. In the process of teaching, teachers must pay attention to the evaluation styles on students and maintain their dignity. For example, when students make the serious pronunciation errors or a slip of the tongue but their classmates laugh at them, teachers should intervene timely the matter, praise students who can show themselves in class, encourage them who are not afraid of making mistakes and correct, at the same time, criticize the improper behaviors of their classmates laughing at the other. The teacher should also be good at grasping students’ flash points, appreciate their merits, amplify their merit, especially in class students who do not speak positively answer the question correctly, teachers should exaggerate their performances to stimulate their self-confidence. However, when students are unable to answer questions, teachers should guide them patiently and give appropriate and positive feedback to maintain their self-esteem and protect their self-confidence.

**Summary**

To sum up, in order to achieve the good teaching effects in higher vocational English teaching, the important role played by students' self-confidence must be greatly attached importance. When English teachers actively try to cultivate the confidence of students who enter into higher vocational colleges with the complex emotions, their interest in English learning will be constantly improved, and the trust between teachers and students will be also constantly strengthened so as to form a virtuous cycle of English learning. Therefore, the higher vocational English teachers, from the first class, should start to integrate the positive emotional factors into the teaching process, establish the close and harmonious relationship with the student in class, actively discover the advantages of students, mobilize students' initiative of learning English, create the relaxed class atmosphere and enhance students' confidence from various sides so as to encourage students to learn English well and achieve the better teaching effect.

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