

Research on English Learning Styles of College students of Zhuang nationality in China

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Abstract - Due to various reasons, there are some differences in learning English between students of Zhuang nationality and students of Han nationality in China. In order to improve English learning of students of Zhuang nationality, this paper analyses the previous researches on learning styles and points out some problems. Through researching and analysing learning styles of students of Zhuang nationality and its influence, this paper provides some proposals to improve teachers' English teaching and students' English learning.

Keywords - College students of Zhuang nationality in China; English learning styles

I. Introduction

With more than 10 million populations, Zhuang nationality is the most populous minority in China. The number of the Zhuang youth receiving higher education is also increasing with the development of China's higher education. Nevertheless, due to historical, economic and cultural factors, there are still some gaps in learning between Zhuang and Han students, especially in English learning. English is also a required course for Zhuang students, therefore, Improving the English proficiency of Zhuang university students and narrowing the gap between Zhuang and Han students becomes a priority. Since the factors affecting the learning of English are very complex, this article focuses mainly on Zhuang students' style of English learning and its influence, and provides some proposals to improve teaching.

II. Previous researches on learning styles

In recent years, with the development of English teaching reform and the deepening of the research of language teaching, the study of the foreign language teaching has transformed from the language itself (such as materials, methods, etc.) to language learners. It has become an important trend for the foreign language teaching and research in this era of globalization that the study object has experienced a transition of object to subject and more personalized attention has been paid to teaching and learning. The study on language learning styles is exactly for the purpose of improving the college English teaching in the new situation. It is of great practical significance to the enhancement of teaching quality: on the one hand, the teachers can use personalized teaching methods and means to achieve more desirable learning outcomes after understanding the characteristics of students' learning styles; on the other hand, students may choose the appropriate learning strategies to enhance self-learning and become successful language learners if they can understand their own learning styles.

The study of learning styles is an important part of the research of individual differences. Many foreign language teachers may have this feeling: some learning methods taught by the teachers, when being used by students, some receive significant results, while others may have little or even no effect. This phenomenon results from the difference in the way the learners accept and understand things, i.e. the divergence of the learners' learning styles. In English learning, the field-independent learners, known for their outstanding analysis ability, demonstrate prominent performance in the traditional classroom teaching concerning grammar analysis and sentence practice; while the field-dependent learners are used to acquire language in the natural environment should or better at the communicative function of language learning.

It is observed in the teaching practice that most students display clear field-independent features; a small number of students are with field-dependent learning styles, they are more outgoing, love to look for opportunities to communicate with other people in learning English, they pay little attention to the details and grammar rules, and appear very confident and feel rewarding as long as their intention of expressing and communicating is achieved despite some minor syntax errors in the speaking.. After a long study the researchers concluded: In the regular classroom learning environment, the field-independent learners are more dominant; while in the natural environment the field-dependent learners are more successful in learning a foreign language, their oral language proficiency is better than field-independent learners (Wang Zhengwen, 2002).

Ever since the introduction of the concept of learning styles, it has emphasized by many linguists and educators who have tried to define the different elements of learning styles from diverse angles, and design their own measurement tools accordingly. Despite the difference on the definition of the learning style, its core is basically the same: the more stable individual learning preferences of the learners formed gradually in learning activities. The West starts earlier than China in the research of learning style, and thus is more mature in both theory and practice. Although China's researchers have made some progresses on the study of learning style, but there is still large space to be further improved in terms of theory and practice. Wang Chuming, Wu Yian, Liu Runqing, Yu Huarong and other scholars have conducted a survey on learning styles, the results showed that: learners' learning styles have some relevance to teachers' teaching. Knowing the characteristics of learners' learning styles has a practical significance to the improvement of teaching quality. Therefore, the study of language learning styles provides a new way of

thinking for language teaching of the new era, and brings a new inspiration for college English teaching.

III . The present status of Zhuang students' English learning styles

The author ever conducted a survey on the learning styles of some Zhuang college students. It shows that 4% of the students input information through the auditory; they like listening to lectures and talking to people; the classroom communicative activities and role-playing are more likely to arouse their interest as opposed to the less appealing writing work; 20% of the students perceive learning objects and learning content by watching, they are good at capturing the details and are sensitive to any visual stimulation but likely to feel confused when the learning contents are about lectures, talks and other forms of learning activities with no video assistance; 5% of the students are of the listening-action type and 10% of the students vision-action type, in addition to the common characteristics of the auditory and visual students, they also like to learn through physical touch and are willing to complete the construction tasks; more students are apt to the integrated use of sensory channels. This survey suggests that: many minority students coming from the economically underdeveloped areas can better appreciate the value and weight of knowledge, and more cherish the hard-won learning opportunities; with relatively strong self-management skills and simple knowledge structure, most of them are of introverted character and not good at oral communication, and lack of the skills of listening, speaking, pronunciation and intonation, which leads to the obstacles of learning: unable to understand teachers' English lecturing, lack of confidence in oral expression class, pressed in the listening class and etc.; learning style has an important impact on the quality of learning, and thus need to be changed to improve students' achievement; the formation of students' learning styles, is influenced not only by the characteristics of the students themselves, but also by the school environment as well as the social environment, it is the result of combined effects; therefore, we must start with the students' inner factors and educational factors in order to enable them to gradually develop and form a good learning style and achieve satisfactory results.

V . The Enlightenment of English learning style on College English Teaching

A. Students should establish a higher level of learning concept

Throughout the learning activities, students' learning concept has an important impact. The differences existed in students' learning concept will lead them to take different cognitive processing and management strategies, thereby affecting the quality of learning. Only when students establish a high level view of learning, can they take further deep processing strategies to enhance the learning process of self-management. Therefore, to establish high-level view of learning is an important condition for the smooth proceeding of learning activities.

B. Guide students to effectively improve their level of understanding processing

Based on the results of factor analysis, we divide the manufacturing strategies of learning process into the surface processing strategies and deep processing strategies, which are of different types and levels and have their own distinctive features. Students employing surface processing strategies only concern about the content specified by teachers, often take the relevant syntax and vocabulary knowledge as separate units, rather than a whole, using the rote method to reproduce details. While students who make use of deep processing strategies tend to put emphasis on the fundamental significance of learning task, explore the inner relation between the learning tasks and other tasks, in order to maximize the understanding of learning content and satisfy their thirst for knowledge. On the whole, surface processing strategies and deep processing strategies have different impact on students' academic achievement. The higher the degree of students' using surface processing strategies is, the lower their academic performance; on the contrary, the higher the level students' using deep processing strategies is, the higher their academic performance. Based on these results, we believe that in the teaching process, students should be taken to prevent the use of surface machining strategies, but encouraged to take deep processing strategies. To achieve this purpose, in addition to the regular courses combined with learning guidance, specific course on learning guidance should also be provided for students so as to realize a more comprehensive learning guide for students, helping them improve their level of cognitive processing. Years of practice has proved it to be a small-invest-quick-effect method. For example, many students who have learned the course of learning styles reflect that this course removes their confusion and mental disorders on study, and points out the future direction of learning and development, bringing an important impact on the transition of the high school students to college students in the real sense.

C. Improve students' self-management learning ability through meta-cognitive training

Learning self-management reflects students' dominant position in the learning process and is thought to be an important reform trend for the international education field in recent years. On the whole, whether it is self-management of learning content or self-management of learning level and result, its role on the improvement of student achievement is obvious. In other words, the stronger students' learning self-management ability is, the better their academic performance. Students' learning deficiencies will be detrimental to their learning quality. The preceding analysis has clearly shown that in most cases, the lack of learning self-management has a significant adverse impact on the learning quality. Students' learning self-management is actually a meta-cognitive activity, self-control of learning activities and a reflection of self-awareness of students in learning activities. Some scholars also call this reflection and self-control of learning activities as meta-learning. Research shows that under the guidance of meta-learning students can effectively guide their own learning and make changes in their learning activities so as to achieve

satisfactory academic performance. Therefore, to enhance students' meta-cognitive abilities, improve their ability of learning self-management is an important aspect of the development of the quality of learning. Self-management learning ability is the core of the problem of learning to learn. For students, the school is a very formal and influential educational scenario in which students make response in their Individual way. In order to successfully adapt to this scenario, they must decide what they need to get from, what they need to meet the requirements to achieve the goal, and how to change strategies when the previous efforts result in nothing. In this sense, self-management needs learners make appropriate control on their motivation and the choice of strategy. In short, self-management learning is a complex process that requires certain cognitive personality factors, appropriate experience and stimulation of education situational factors.

VI. Conclusion

Research on learning styles shows that the learning styles are beneficial on the whole learning process but none of them can be perfect. Learners who are aware of their learning styles have the inner power of self-learning, and can adapt to the teacher's cognitive style. Thus, we can set up learning styles which are adaptive and can be transformed into conscious driving power. If we allow the learners to understand learning styles, and let them know to consciously use learning styles and learning strategies, their learning will be much better. Learner's learning style is relatively stable, but not static. It has plasticity. After teachers understand the different learning styles of learners, they should adjust their teaching style accordingly. As an intermediary, the foreign language teachers, on the one hand, should respect the personality characteristics of the students and take diverse ways to organize a variety of classroom activities in order that

their teaching styles match the learners' learning styles and the learners' needs are satisfied; on the other hand, they also need to make every efforts to expand the learners' learning style to help them achieve self-study. In short, it is believed that the study of learning style theory should not be limited to the organizational activities of teachers to adapt to different learning styles of learners, more emphasis should be paid on the study of how to help learners develop their potential for effective learning styles and learning strategies.

Acknowledgement

The study is supported by *Education Department of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in China*. The number: 201010LX561

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