Research on the Application of Emotional Education in College English Classes of Private Universities

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the emotional characteristics of students in English learning in private universities and proposes practical strategies to enhance language acquisition through emotional engagement, fostering a supportive learning environment and improving overall teaching efficiencies. Drawing on empirical studies and practical cases, the research highlights actionable approaches for educators to address emotional needs in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Keywords: Emotional education; Private universities; College English teaching

1. Introduction

As higher education advances, private universities contribute significantly to higher education systems. However, students from private universities share common problems in English learning, such as lack of confidence, weak foundation, and deficiency in learning motivation. The traditional teaching emphasizes the display of grammar and language points. Students' emotional factors are neglected to some degree. Emotional education addresses students' emotional needs and evokes students' passion in learning English and cultivates students' healthy personalities and positive life styles. Application of emotional education in college English classes could improve teaching effects and promote students' overall development.

2. Emotional problems of students in English learning

Students who enter private universities mostly due to their unexpected *Gaokao* results. They could not accept the fact, and they need a period of time to recover from the reality to face it and regain their confidence. There are some emotional problems they have to overcome at the beginning of the new college year [1].

2.1. Foreign languages anxiety among college students

In a longitudinal study, private university students scored 28% higher on foreign language classroom anxiety scale than their public university peers, especially in speaking activities. They are frightened to participate in class discussion and refuse to communicate with teachers. The large number of vocabulary and listening,

speaking, reading, and writing skills practice leads to their anxieties. Especially the oral expressions make them feel nervous and uneasy in English classes.

2.2. Insufficient learning confidence as language learners

Many students develop their deficient self-concept due to repeated failures. They may encounter many setbacks in previous English learning experiences, such as poor exam results and imperfect class performances. All these factors lead to their fear of English learning, and they lose their enthusiasm and confidence gradually [2].

2.3. Lack of learning motivation

Many students in private universities do not have clear goals in English learning. Some of them learn English only to pass CET4 and CET6 or to pass the final exams. And "English is useless" is gaining traction among students in private universities. With the popularity of AI in China, many students take advantage of AI to translate and finish their English assignments, thus their motivation to learn English becomes weaker.

3. The importance of emotional education in English teaching

Private university students often face high academic and social pressures. Emotional education can provide them with tools to manage stress, build resilience, and maintain a positive mindset, which in turn can enhance their overall well-being and academic performance [3]. English teaching should not only focus on the training of language skills, but also emphasize the emotional development of students. Emotional education could build a secure and inclusive learning atmosphere and help students overcome their language anxiety and improve their motivation to learn English and promote holistic education.

3.1. Stimulating learning interests

According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, negative emotions could prevent the input of languages. And interest is the best teacher. Emotional education focuses on fulfilling students' psychological requirements for respect and understanding through positive teacher-student interactions, creating a supportive learning environment [4]. Effective communication involves not only linguistic competence but also emotional awareness and empathy. By teaching students to recognize and express emotions in English, teachers can help them develop more nuanced communication skills. Teachers should acknowledge individual differences, offering encouragement and constructive feedback to boost students' self-efficacy.

3.2. Enhancing students' learning motivations

Emotional education can create a positive and supportive learning environment, which fosters students' intrinsic motivation to learn English. When students feel emotionally secure, they are more likely to participate actively in class activities and take risks in using the language. Research shows a 37% increase in learning initiative when teachers use encouraging evaluations (e.g., personalized praise for effort) and design interest-based activities like vocabulary games or debates in class. Teachers should create opportunities for students to actively participate in classroom activities, and give timely feedback and encouragement to students' every performance.

3.3. Improving teaching effects

Research and practical evidence show that emotional education significantly improves teaching effects. The inclusive and tolerant teaching environment lowers students' learning anxiety, and students are more likely to

express their points. Teachers' emotional leading-in could arouse students' participation in class discussion and other teaching activities. Emotional education could help build good teacher-student relationships, and students could learn English in a relaxing way, which would improve the teaching effects.

3.4. Promoting the integration of language learning and emotional development

English learning is not only about the cultivation of language skills but also a process of emotional communication. Through emotional education, students can learn to express their emotions and understand others, thereby enhancing their intercultural communication skills. Emotional education helps students build confidence in language learning, reduces anxiety, and encourages them to speak up and participate actively in classroom interactions.

3.5. Improving students' mental health and emotional management skills

The university stage is a critical period for students' psychological and emotional development, with many facing challenges such as academic pressure and interpersonal issues. Emotional education helps students learn to manage their emotions and alleviate stress, thereby improving their mental health. Incorporating emotional education into English classes can facilitate discussions on emotional topics and encourage students to share personal experiences, helping them develop the ability to express and handle emotions while enhancing self-awareness.

4. Strategies of the application of emotional education in college English teaching

4.1. Building a supportive classroom environment

A harmonious English learning atmosphere is fundamental in relaxing students' emotional anxiety. Emotional education fosters a positive classroom atmosphere by addressing students' core emotional needs (e.g., respect and understanding) and establishing interactive teacher-student relationships. For instance, contextualized teaching methods integrated with students' interests can increase learning autonomy by 37%. Instead of correcting students' every mistake, teachers should allow their mistakes and praise students' every little progress. "No laughing rule" could be built in class, and teachers encourage students to express their views bravely and regard mistakes as a fantastic experience. Affective box could be placed in classrooms. Students could write down their learning problems and emotional trouble in life; teachers could provide effective help within their abilities. Based on students' English levels, cultural inclusion is allowed when necessary. For instance, when teaching grammar and sentence pattern, teachers could use native languages to ensure students' understanding. Relaxing learning atmosphere is not to diminish the pressures, but to convert pressure to challenging excitement. When students begin to accept and love English study, it is the real beginning.

4.2. Adopting diverse teaching methods relating to emotional education

Teachers can use various teaching methods to evoke students' emotional needs. Focusing on students' emotional status could improve teaching efficiency and achieve excellent effects [5].

4.2.1. Situational teaching method

Creating a real language situation, situational method provides a performing environment for emotional education. For instance, in teaching Unit 8 Embracing Diversity, students are divided into three groups to simulate the UN congress. Students are eager to express their political views, and this achieves unbelievable

teaching effects. Situational method transmits language study to emotional experiences. Students develop emotional awareness and intercultural emotional intelligence, and affective linguistic competence in situational performance.

4.2.2. Cooperative teaching method

Cooperative teaching method is also available in English classes. Teachers could assign cooperative tasks to students, such as poster design in groups and social investigations in groups. The investigation outcomes could be revealed by PPT or videos. Students could obtain satisfaction in project-based learning. Group discussion is also an effective way to achieve emotional education. Students are required to complete the English tasks together, such as group speeches, group translations. In the process of cooperative work, students can communicate with each other, learn, and encourage each other. When talking about the topic of "integrity," students are divided into two groups to debate. The topic is "Integrity is always the best choice." or "It is acceptable to tell a white lie." Students are assigned different tasks, some are in charge of collecting the arguments evidence, and others are debaters. Students feel a sense of achievement and inner fulfillment.

4.2.3. Case study method

The purpose of the case study method is to identify specific learning challenges. In analyzing the specific cases, students could develop personalized learning pathways and enhance diagnostic competence [6]. When comparing the diversity between south and north in China, students express their cross-cultural viewpoints and receive their own emotional responses. Taking Floyd as an example, students deeply analyze the racism in American society and obtain profound emotions from the case.

4.2.4. Multimedia teaching method

To enrich students' understanding of the teaching contents and the theme of the text, multimedia technology such as pictures, audio, and video could be applied in English teaching. When learning about the keyword "racism," teachers can play videos about Nazi concentration camps. The dual sensory experience causes a great stimulation for students. Some girls even shed tears when they are astonished by the miserable life of Jewish children. It is a huge, spiritually overwhelming lesson for students, which would leave an emotional mark on their lives. Digital tools, such as emotion-tracking apps or online discussion forums, can be used to support emotional learning. For example, students can use apps to reflect on their emotional states or participate in online discussions about emotional topics.

4.3. The transition of teachers' roles

Teachers should accept the role transition from the knowledge transmitter to emotional facilitator. Positive feedback languages could be used in class, such as "I appreciate your creative ideas," "I see your progress," "You really impressed me!" The role of teachers could also be active listeners, emotional observers, and the connector between knowledge and emotion; and teachers would also be the co-learner with students, to experience the weaknesses and breakthroughs in students' development. But there may be some challenges and problems for teachers. It could lead to teachers' emotional exhaustion when they continually focus on students' emotions [7]. Colleges should supply psychological support resources and consultants for teachers. Many educators lack awareness of emotional education techniques, so professional workshops are essential.

5. Challenges and solutions

While integrating emotional education into English classes offers numerous benefits, there are challenges that need to be addressed, such as limited course time and insufficient emotional education skills among teachers. Teachers may find it difficult to balance emotional education with the demands of the curriculum.

5.1. The balance between language teaching and emotional education

University English courses typically prioritize language skills (such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as core objectives, while emotional education may be regarded as "additional content" and difficult to incorporate into the curriculum. The solutions can be that incorporate emotional education into language teaching by using reading materials, movie clips, or discussion topics centered on emotional themes, allowing students to focus on emotional expression while learning the language. Clearly define emotional education goals in the course outline, such as "Develop students' empathy through group discussions" or "Help students express their emotions through writing exercises."

5.2. Lack of students' emotional openness

Some students may be unwilling to express their true emotions in class due to cultural background, introverted personality, or lack of trust. Teachers can use icebreaker activities, group collaboration, and active listening to make students feel respected and understood, encouraging them to share their emotions more freely [8].

5.3. Teachers' limited emotional education capacity

Some teachers may lack theoretical knowledge or practical experience in emotional education, making it difficult to effectively guide students in emotional communication [9]. To solve the problems, teachers can participate in emotional education-related training, workshops, or read relevant books to enhance their emotional education skills. Teachers can also improve their emotional education strategies by writing teaching reflections or participating in teaching discussions.

6. Conclusion

Emotional education serves as a vital supplement to traditional English teaching methods in private universities. By fostering empathy, reducing anxiety, and strengthening teacher-student rapport, it creates a holistic learning environment conducive to both academic and personal growth. In conclusion, emotional education is not only an important component of university English classes but also a vital pathway to fostering students' holistic development. Through emotional education, students can not only improve their language skills but also achieve growth in emotional, psychological, and social aspects. Future research should explore the long-term effects of emotional education on students' language proficiency and emotional well-being, as well as its applicability in diverse cultural contexts.

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