

A Study on the Role of Lifelong Learning in English Teaching

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Abstract: Under the background of lifelong education, English teaching in colleges and universities should be based on education and teaching methods, pay attention to students' emotional experience, and help them overcome difficulties encountered in English learning. Through the guidance and training by teachers, we can strengthen students' self-learning awareness, build their self-confidence, create an English learning atmosphere, reduce tensions in English teaching, and ensure that students' English skills can be improved. The role of lifelong learning in English teaching is reflected in many aspects. This paper first analyzes the development of lifelong learning and its application in English teaching, and lastly puts forward the methods to incorporate the concept of lifelong learning in English teaching.

Keywords: Lifelong learning; English; Theoretical development; Role

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1. Introduction

In the era of the knowledge economy, learning is a continuous process. In recent years, with the deepening reform of quality education and the increasingly frequent exchanges between China and foreign countries, the new age has posed novel challenges to the improvements of English teachers' professional skills. Lifelong learning is a new type of educational thought that should meet the requirements of the development of the times, which requires overcoming the disadvantages of traditional teaching models ^[1]. As its name suggests, lifelong learning covers a person's entire life, including all kinds of education received at different stages of life, such as school education, re-education after entering society, full-time education, and on-the-job education. With the concept of lifelong learning put forward by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, it has received extensive attention all over the world. Since the 21st century, lifelong learning has become an important basis for educational reform in many countries. Under the guidance of the idea of lifelong learning, English teachers have put forward new requirements for English teaching. English teachers must make a new orientation and seek new teaching strategies in order to improve English teaching qualities ^[2].

2. Theory development of lifelong learning

The concept of lifelong learning was formally established by UNESCO as early as 1965. In 1976, UNESCO members voted to adopt the recommendation on the Development of Adult Education, which contains a number of specific suggestions on how to achieve lifelong learning^[3]. With changes in society and continuous educational demands, the idea of lifelong learning also evolves. The concept of lifelong learning is not limited to the knowledge acquired from school education, educational institutions, or other social institutions, but all learning activities carried out consciously by everyone in society. With the rapid development of China's economy, China's life-long education has also developed in a rapid way, and its scale is constantly expanding. In 1995, the Education Law of the People's Republic of China was formally promulgated, establishing the concept of lifelong learning. In the reports of the 16th CPC National Congress and the 17th CPC National Congress, it has been mentioned many times to improve the modern national education system and establish a lifelong learning system. At the same time, the concept of lifelong learning also brings new challenges to college English teaching^[4].

3. Characteristics of lifelong learning

3.1. Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning, as the name implies, is learning throughout a person's life, and this is also the most important feature of lifelong learning. It breaks the structure of formal school and regards education as the sum of all kinds of training received in the course of one's life, and the unity of the whole process from preschool to old age. The concept is composed of formal and informal parts, covering different periods and forms of education^[5].

Lifelong learning includes not only traditional schooling but also various forms of informal learning, such as on-the-job training, social communication, independent learning, etc. People can choose their own learning methods and time, according to their personal needs and learning interests, to achieve a personalized learning path^[6].

3.2. Diversity

Lifelong learning covers different varieties of people, that is, people who carry out lifelong learning, regardless of men and women, young and old, rich or poor, race or gender. Dabe, a UNESCO education expert, believes that lifelong learning is characterized by democratization, and he does not approve of using educational knowledge as the service of elites, but to make education available to the public with all kinds of talents^[7]. In fact, in today's society, everyone wants to survive, which cannot go far without lifelong learning. In order to survive and develop, lifelong learning has become a necessity for modern people to adapt to the development of the times.

3.3. Extensiveness

Lifelong learning includes three aspects: family education, school education, and social education. We can say that education refers to all periods, places, occasions, and education in one's life. Lifelong learning broadens the field of learning and brings vitality to all people's education^[8]. The breadth of lifelong learning is also reflected in the subject area. Traditional school education often focuses on the imparting of subject knowledge, while lifelong learning pays more attention to the cultivation of comprehensive quality and skills involving multiple disciplines. This includes interpersonal skills, innovation skills, cross-cultural communication skills, and so on. The extensive nature of lifelong learning enables individuals to not only acquire professional knowledge and skills, but also broaden their horizons, enhance cultural literacy, improve comprehensive quality, and make

greater contributions to personal development and social progress.

3.4. Flexibility and practicality

Modern lifelong education is flexible as anyone can receive education flexibly at any time and anywhere. The time, place, content, and method of learning can be chosen by ourselves. Everyone can choose the most suitable course according to their own interests and actual needs^[9]. The flexibility of lifelong learning enables learners to learn at any time and anywhere according to their own life and work situations and is no longer limited to the traditional classroom and school environment. At the same time, lifelong learning focuses on practicality, emphasizing the application of acquired knowledge and skills to real life and work. Learners can choose courses related to their career development and interests to enhance their professional competence and employment competitiveness. This kind of practical learning makes lifelong learning closer to the actual needs, with more realistic significance.

4. Roles of lifelong learning in English teaching

4.1. Reorientating college English education

Education is a matter of a lifetime career, and learning is a growing process of one's life program. With the deepening reform of modern educational thought, quality education for students and the cultivation and development of students' comprehensive abilities have become the focus of the educational field. First of all, in the traditional Chinese education model, an inherent teaching model has been formed between teachers and students. However, with the rapid development of China's social economy, its shortcomings are gradually revealed. Although there has been a relatively new development in the concept of English education in China, there are also many problems. The purpose of English teaching has shifted from simply passing the examination and achieving good results to using English skills, lifelong learning, and so on^[10]. The role of lifelong learning in English teaching also lies in repositioning the goals and methods of college English education, from simply pursuing examination results to focusing on the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability and the improvement of practical application skills. Lifelong learning emphasizes students' initiative and independent learning, encourages students to constantly explore and learn, improve their English level, and realize the effective combination of English and real life. This educational concept provides new ideas and methods for college English teaching, which is conducive to cultivating talents with global vision and cross-cultural communication skills.

4.2. Attaching importance to students' subjectivity

The concept of lifelong learning emphasizes students' subjective initiative in the learning process, so as to achieve the purpose of self-development, which is consistent with some other important learning theories. Among them, the people-oriented learning theory holds that students' internal behavior plays a significant role in the learning process, and it also emphasizes the important role of students' self-awareness and self-guidance in learning. In this theory, it is emphasized that taking students as the main body should not only rely on teachers' knowledge indoctrination but should be based on students' active construction. This requires English teachers to shift from the traditional teacher-centered teaching model to the student-centered teaching model^[11]. The purpose of English teaching is to cultivate students' ability to self-study and practical use of English, to guide students' autonomous learning after class while imparting knowledge, so as to meet the needs of lifelong learning. English teaching should pay attention to the cultivation of students' language expression skills, especially their self-confidence, create a variety of teaching situations, and improve their English

communication skills. On this basis, English teachers guide students to adopt a variety of autonomous learning methods and learn actively, and continuously improve students' autonomous learning by guiding students to carry out inquiry learning and innovative learning, improving students' lifelong English learning.

5. Countermeasures for the application of lifelong learning in English teaching

5.1. Forming the concept of autonomous English learning

In essence, foreign language learning focuses more on the input and output of knowledge. In traditional English teaching, students are generally in a passive state, and the indoctrination teaching method leads to the decline of students' autonomous learning ability. Therefore, in English teaching, we should try to avoid learning mechanically. Before teaching, teachers can ask students to understand that the purpose of learning English is not to take an English test or to get a certificate, but to continue improving their English communication skills or using English as a means of learning and mastering other subjects. At the same time, English teachers should also prevent students from relying on the English language and discuss with students to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their own learning situation. Furthermore, English teachers have opportunities to use different class forms, such as online courses or face-to-face courses, to introduce specific foreign cultures and phenomena. In this way, students are encouraged to think actively and write down their views and summaries of their own understandings about different cultures. In this way, a characterized learning method will come along during the process ^[12].

5.2. Actively creating a friendly and harmonious English classroom atmosphere

In his book *Psychology of Classroom Education*, American psychologist Lin Glenn clearly pointed out that the most fundamental thing to do well in teaching is to establish a deep relationship between teachers and students. If a teacher does not love students, then the teacher is not a qualified teacher. If there are no true feelings in classroom teaching, teachers will not be able to adapt to the needs of modern teaching. Therefore, English teachers should be good guides and motivators and lead their students to good paths. In addition, during the teaching process, teachers should give students more encouragement and praise, allowing them to express their opinions, respect and understand every college student, and create a free, active, and positive English learning environment. When answering questions, teachers should not worry that students will make mistakes, but encourage them to say every word or sentence ^[13]. Only when teachers have enough patience, students will not be afraid of making mistakes, so as to overcome their fear in learning. In the process of providing education and teaching services for students, teachers can also learn more professional knowledge from students. Harmonious communication is not only an incentive for teachers and students to learn from each other, but also an effective way for teachers to study education and teaching methods.

5.3. Cultivating college students' awareness of cross-cultural communication

Every language is produced in a specific social and cultural environment. College English teachers must carry out continuous foreign language teaching for students in order to reduce or even eliminate their language misreading in social life. In English teaching, teachers should organically combine classroom teaching with special lectures and language discussions to ensure that students can fully understand the ways of thinking, religious beliefs, values, and customs of countries all over the world. allay their worries about cultural differences, so as to improve their interest in English learning.

5.4. Establishing a reasonable and scientific English classroom evaluation mechanism

From the perspective of lifelong learning, because of this specific group of students, the evaluation mechanism of English teaching should be different from that of full-time students and adopt various ways of learning evaluation. In the process of constructing the evaluation system of English teaching, we should pay attention to two aspects. The first aspect is strengthening the self-evaluation of students. As the main object of study, college students have the best understanding of their English proficiency. Through students' self-evaluation, teachers can make an objective and fair evaluation for students. Secondly, the examination results cannot be used as the only basis to measure the academic quality of students^[14]. If we only use scores to evaluate students' academic performance, it is unfair to those students who are bad at English but are conscientious, which will weaken their enthusiasm for English learning. English teachers should make a preliminary evaluation of students' English learning according to their classroom performance, homework completion, and attendance, and then establish a student evaluation team to make a comprehensive evaluation of students' learning and progress.

5.5. Training English teachers with a sense of lifelong learning

In the new era, the degree of specialization of English teachers will directly affect the quality of personnel training. English teachers should establish and strengthen the concept of lifelong learning and realize the transformation of their roles. Firstly, English teachers should continue to explore English learning methods as learners and carry out self-learning on this basis. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to reflective learning and cooperative learning, review and check their own teaching work at an appropriate time, expand the scope of observation from teaching to students and class management, and widen the scope of learning. This is of great significance to the construction of an efficient English classroom, but it is also necessary to strengthen exchanges and references with counterparts at home and abroad. Secondly, English teachers are also researchers because of the strong practicality of English courses. Therefore, we should pay attention to the reform of teaching methods. Due to the lack of a language environment, there are common problems in English teaching^[15]. Therefore, we should explore how to improve students' learning enthusiasm from the perspective of "life education." Teachers in colleges and universities should actively carry out practical research, constantly learn and test various teaching methods, improve their professional skills, combine the concept of lifelong learning with teaching work, and promote the improvement and reform of the education system.

6. Conclusion

In a word, English teaching under the lifelong education model must fully take into account the emotional factors in English teaching and strengthen the cultivation of students' awareness of autonomous English learning. On the basis of building students' English confidence, teachers can create an English learning atmosphere, reduce students' tension in the process of English learning, ensure the improvement of their English skills, and cultivate students' awareness and habits of lifelong learning.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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