

Methods of Stimulating Students' Interest in English Learning

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Keywords: Interest, English learning, Stimulate, Students.

Abstract. In English learning, the most important thing is to stimulate students' interest, and it is very necessary for teachers to attach great importance to the students' interest in the whole process of teaching and learning. This paper starts with the discussion of the importance of interest in English learning; then, the second part of the thesis analyses the teachers' guiding roles in English learning and teaching, which is the base of arousing students' interest in English learning. The third part puts forward some new and helpful teaching methods to stimulate students' interest. In a word, the foremost duty of a teacher is to try his/her best to arouse students' interest.

1. Introduction

In a long period, especially in primary schools, teachers in China are all normally geared to operate teaching via the traditional teacher-centered approach in English class. During an English lesson, most students just choose to keep silent and act as audience. They seldom speak English or raise their hands to answer the teacher's questions voluntarily, and some even fall asleep. It seems that they are attaching little importance to their English lesson. This kind of spoon-fed method of teaching plays an unfavorable and unacceptable role in English teaching, and it actually reduce students' interests in English and this kind of forced-feeding teaching would not be good for students' development, even it can gradually make them lose their interest in English learning.

Einstein once said, "Interest is the best teacher." It is definitely right that students' initiative in English learning is difficult to spur without interest. Interest of learning is an essential integrant in the course of both teaching and learning, and it is the most realistic and active factor of enthusiasm and initiative. Therefore, it is very important for all the teachers to try their best to arouse their students' interest in English learning in order to help them learn English well in the shortest possible time.

2. Teachers' Guiding Roles in Stimulating Students' Interest in English Learning

In students' English learning, teachers' guiding roles are increasingly important, and teachers do play a very indispensable role in the course of teaching and learning. To be a qualified teacher, one should not only pay much attention to protecting students' interest but also make every effort to arouse students' interest in learning English.

It is often said that all the intellectual work relies on interest. How a teacher inspires students to learn and improve their learning initiative is the first key point in English teaching. From the psychological point of view, the students have emotional instability and unsustainable interest. Therefore, teachers should make full use of interest to let their students participate actively in learning and really become the masters of the whole class. In English teaching, teachers should bring their guiding roles into full play. The following aspects may be effective and necessary.

2.1 Raising Students' Consciousness in English Learning

Although the students are full of curiosity, they usually cannot concentrate on doing things long. Considering this, having a better idea of the learning aim can raise students' consciousness in English learning. In this way, students can not only raise their enthusiasm and activeness, but also keep their interest for a longer time. On the contrary, if teachers could not help students set up the correct

learning aim, it is impossible to stimulate the students' interest successfully. In order to raise students' consciousness and encourage their initiative in English learning, all the teachers are supposed to do their best to raise the sense of responsibility in their teaching.

2.2 Arousing Students' Desire for Knowledge and Skills

John Locke once said, "Where there is no desire, there will be no industry." It is important to encourage students to arrange their time for study autonomously. Teachers should encourage them to use the creative way to solve problems, which will make them keep the desire for the knowledge and regard learning as fun. Keeping them interested in learning is supposed to be a good way for them to experience a happy learning process.

2.3 Helping Students to Set Realistic Goals

Setting realistic goals is a crucial factor in stimulating the interest of students, and it is usually a way to make them believe they are making progress day by day. It is thus important for teachers to set realistic goals for students before the start of learning, and through this step, students can do better than before. In the process of teaching and learning, letting students experience the sense of success is very important and necessary. In this process, students can collect information, discuss problems with their classmates, work hard on questions, and take an active part in class activities. In the practical learning, students themselves can experience much sense of success, which will further enhance their interest in English learning.

2.4 Helping Students Build Confidence

It is commonly accepted that confidence can make one have great achievement. Similarly, if a student has enough confidence, he/she will probably achieve success. However, Rome was not built in one day, so confidence cannot be built overnight. Confidence is very important for one person though it is built difficultly. First of all, teachers should be good at using examples to inspire students. Secondly, teachers should create opportunities for students so that they can experience success instead of failure, and they will not doubt their own abilities. Thirdly, teachers should be adept at discovering their students' merits, because this could be a kind of motivation for confidence. For instance, some students do well in pronunciation, so teachers can praise them and ask them to read in the class as models, and in this way, these students will not only be good at pronunciation after a period of time, but also perform better in many other aspects.

If we can use good methods and give them more encouragement instead of criticism, students would have more confidence and interest to learn English. Teachers surely have responsibilities to make students realize that making mistakes in learning is normal and acceptable. In addition, teachers should make students realize that there are no so called easy or difficult questions, and encourage them not to be afraid of making mistakes in front of classmates or other people. To some extent, students' confidence plays a decisive role in arousing the interest in learning English better.

2.5 Building Good Relationships Between Students and Teachers

As the old saying goes, "A student will believe in teachings only when he gets close to his teacher." The students' interest has a very great relation with their teacher. If they admire a teacher, they would love his/her lesson, and then have the interest in learning the subject which he/she teaches. Therefore, teachers should try their utmost to establish an environment which is full of trust, respect, help, solidity, and make every student love English from the love of the teacher.

As a teacher, it is very necessary for he/she to communicate with students and establish a good relationship with them. It is the premise for teachers to love their own students and help them build interest in English. In fact, each student need make a close relationship with teachers and sometimes they want to draw their attention. If this need gets satisfied, it can make the student learn English initiatively and actively. But every student has unique personality, so teachers should spend much time in finding out how to get along with their students and make friends with them, then students will be active in English class and consider learning it as a happy thing in their spare time.

3. Applying New Teaching Methods to Stimulate Students' Interest

To some extent, most traditional teaching method definitely could not stimulate students' interests and could not give pleasure and joy to students. Students should never be merely sitting in the classroom and just acting like empty bottles waiting to be filled. Thus, teachers should adopt diversified teaching methods instead of unchanged ones to enliven the dull atmosphere in the classroom and achieve good effect of learning.

Society is developing, so teaching methods should be changed with it, too. It is necessary for an English teacher to create an attractive language environment for students, which can foster the students' learning interest, so using some modern teaching technologies may be a necessity in English class. Therefore, the teachers have to use various kinds of teaching forms to arouse the students' interest in English learning.

3.1 Using Media

No doubt that using media which are full of pictures and colors can draw students' attention successfully because students are much easier attracted by the things they see, such as an object, a picture or a chart, and this interesting method can let them have a better understanding of what is being taught in class.

By using visual aids, students could not only memorize the new words, but also learn cultural information in a very easy and relaxing way. Interesting pictures make them learn English voluntarily and arouse their interest to search for more new words and sentences, and to speak more to each other.

3.2 Holding Various English Activities

As is known to all of us, the classroom is the main place for students to study and use language. The traditional teaching with boring and depressing atmosphere cannot arouse students' interest in learning. Teachers should use appropriate language, expression and movement to motivate students to learn according to students' psychological characteristics and their capacities.

The main goal of English teaching is to train the English communicative ability of students. However, communication is inseparable from activities. Colorful English activities can give their creativity and competitiveness a full play, and can make a positive atmosphere to create the space for the students to perform. There can be a wide variety of English contest, such as singing competition, tongue twister contest, story contest, riddle contest, recitation contest, speech contest and so on. During these activities, students with different levels of knowledge can have the opportunity to join and win, have the sense of accomplishment from learning English, and have more profound understanding of what they have learned from the activities. Therefore, they not only attend English classes energetically, but also get much experience of success and improve their English skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. What is more, it can make them have more durable interest in English learning and let them know that it is not difficult to learn English well.

3.3 Giving Commendations and Rewards

Lincoln once said, "Everyone likes praise in the human nature; the most pressing need is eager to be commended." An appropriate recognition is an incentive. Especially for the students, it can increase their confidence of learning, and enhance their interest in learning English. Ten times criticisms must be not better than one time praise.

Repeated stimulation can make students have the enjoyment of success, and then have more interest in learning and they will study harder and harder.

4. Summary

Interest is the direct motivation to stimulate students' learning. Only when they are happy to learn and interested in learning, can they improve their English. Therefore, it is essential to arouse students' interest in English learning and teaching.

Both teachers and students have to spare no effort to stimulate students' interest in English learning. On the one hand, teachers had better adopt more useful and new teaching methods to enliven the classroom atmosphere, guide students to maintain the interest of learning. They should cultivate students' good habits of learning English, and help them get right methods of learning English step by step. On the other hand, students are expected to build their interest and determination of learning English, and they should have the clear intention to learn, the positive attitude, and the confidence to improve their English.

In a word, interest in English is the most important starting-point for students to learn English well; hence, the foremost duty of an English teacher is to try his/her best to arouse students' interest, and a sustainable interest in English learning will play an important role in their English learning and improving.

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