

On Resolving Emotional Differentiation of Language Learners in College English Layering Teaching System

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Abstract. Language learners who have trouble managing their emotional difficulties are prone to develop a number of cognitive problems. Having considered a number of issues pertinent to college English layering teaching system, emotional differentiation of language learners within different layers is highlighted by this research. Realistic analysis shows that emotional differentiation of language learners should not be underestimated and neglected in college English language layering teaching system, and more endeavors and energies should be directed towards building a countermeasure mechanism in foreign language learning. Emotional differentiation of college English language learners can be solved through thinking with more experience, taking dynamic notice of emotions, harnessing the power of emotions, and creating an emotionally safe environment, so that learners are more likely to achieve emotional and academic developments in college English language layering teaching system.

Introduction

The choices learners make in language learning involve both mental and emotional processing, and cognitive reasoning may be influenced by the way the learner feel about a certain situation. In other words, learners who have trouble managing their emotional health are prone to develop a number of cognitive problems in language learning field. Having considered a number of issues pertinent to college English layering teaching system, emotional differentiation of language learners within different layers is highlighted by this research. How to keep learners emotional healthy has become a compelling and demanding work in college English layering teaching system. This article aims at reflecting about the potential emotional difficulties occurred in college English layering teaching system and practical solutions to the problem of emotional differentiation of English language learners. By getting insights into the ways in which language learners' emotions function and benefit in language learning, language learners are anticipated to achieve both emotional and academic developments in college English layering teaching system.

Theoretical Rationale for Emotions in Foreign Language Learning

Emotion and reason. Emotions simply exist, and we can't easily change them nor ignore them. What are emotions? According the information found in Wikipedia website, emotions have been described by some theorists as discrete and consistent responses to internal or external events which have a particular significance for the organism. However, Antonio Damasio states that emotion is at the opposite end from reason, easily the finest human ability, and reason is presumed to be entirely independent from emotion[1]. Compared with reason, emotion is subjective, elusive and vague, and it's thought of as the irrational feeling that's beyond our control. Then, may reason override our emotions? Yes, but one thing that we can't ignore is, although reason may override our emotions, it rarely changes our real feelings about an issue. That's why it's argued that emotion is often a more powerful determinant of our behavior than our brain's rational processes[2]. And it's also congruent with what are pointed out by Daniel Goleman in his brilliant report from the frontiers of psychology and neuroscience which offers startling new insight into our "two minds" (i.e., the rational and the

emotional), and how they together shape our destiny. He found that among the ingredients for success, intelligence counts for roughly 10% , while the rest depends on everything else including emotional intelligence[3]. In sum, emotional intelligence is more important than one's intelligence in attaining success in their lives and careers, and it's advocated that the cultivation of emotional intelligence not be underestimated, but rather be put on the language instructional agenda.

Emotions in language learning. Although emotion is one of the most influential factors related to excellence in foreign language education, there is a dilemma faced by language instructors that a large amount of students are subject to emotional illiteracy, emotional deficiency and even emotional hunger. It's found that one reason for this is the neglect of emotion by psychologists during most of the 20th century, as emotion was not trusted in the laboratory. In other words, emotions have not been sufficiently studied in the field of English language teaching, although the process of learning a foreign language is replete with emotions. It's also agreed with the findings of Claire Kramsch. In her study of learners' beliefs about the language learning process, some learners described their experience as "traveling to new places", whereas others described their experience as "undergoing a painful medical procedure"[4]. These vastly different interpretations of the language learning experience illustrate the impact of emotions of each individual on their language learning. The connection between emotions and language learning is fascinating, and we need to think of students as more than mere brain tissue and bodies. In a word, emotion should be widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of foreign language learning.

Insights into affective filter. Linguist and educator Stephen Krashen proposed the Monitor Model in *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* as published in 1982[5]. In the Monitor Model, the affective filter hypothesis was put forward as a theoretical construct to account for the influence of affective factors on language acquisition. According to Krashen, affect refers to non-linguistic variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, and the affective filter is an invisible psychological filter that can either facilitate or hinder language production in a second (or foreign) language[6]. On one hand, certain negative emotions, such as anxiety, self-doubt, and mere boredom interfere with the process of acquiring a second (or foreign) language by preventing or blocking comprehensible input from reaching the language acquisition device. On the other, positive affective responses to one's environment support the intake of comprehensible input and facilitate risk-taking behavior in regards to practicing and learning a second (or foreign) language. Merrill Swain commented that, Krashen really did bring in a new shift in thinking about language learning by introducing the affective filter, as emotion was rarely considered before that[7]. Emotions influence language learning, and the reverse relationship, that language learning may influence emotions, is also true. All in all, foreign language instructors should and can work to control the effects of the affective filter of language learners and establish a positive and supportive learning environment for better acquisition of English language learning .

Realistic Analysis of Emotional Differentiation of College English Language Learners in Layering Teaching System

Towards the layering teaching system. According to *College English Curriculum Requirements*, drawn up by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, "the teaching of college English should follow the principle of providing different guidance for different groups of students and instructing them in accordance with their aptitude so as to meet the specific needs of individualized teaching. The requirements for undergraduate college English teaching are set at three levels, i.e., basic requirements, intermediate requirements, and higher requirements. Non-English majors are required to attain to one of the three levels of requirements after studying and practicing English at school "[8] On this occasion, various college English layering teaching systems have flourished in colleges and universities. Language learners are expected to be divided based on their English language proficiency since all types of language classes within layer A, layer B and layer C are incorporated into college English teaching system, as shown in Fig.1. The idea behind layering teaching system is that, language classes within layer A are partaken by language

students with excellent foreign language proficiency who learn at a fast pace; language classes within layer B are made up of students with medium level of foreign language skills who learn at a moderate pace; language classes within layer C are chosen by students with weak foreign language capacities who learn at a low space. Language students are anticipated to avoid an inefficient learning experience as they are taught using curricula specially geared to their innate strengths.

In sum, doors open as English language learners are given access to different kinds of curriculum by adopting college English layering teaching system. It's agreed that the layering teaching system does have much to offer students by taking account of different levels of learners in English language learning process.

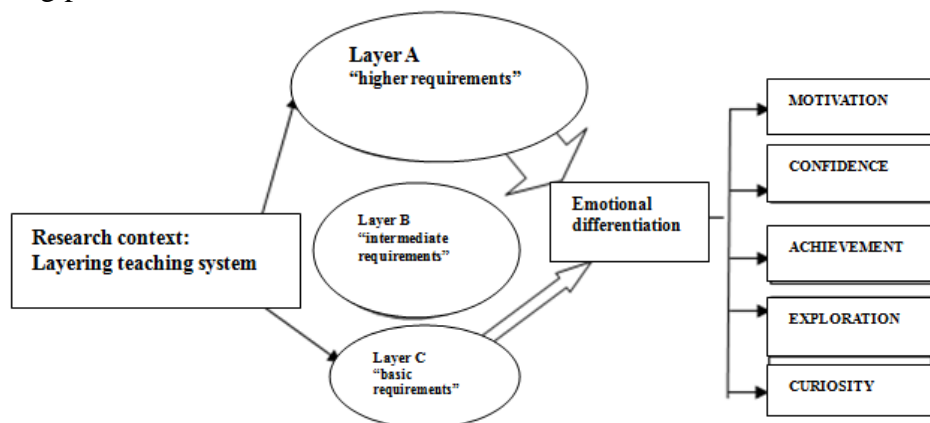


Fig.1. Emotions differentiation in the layering teaching system

The issue of emotional differentiation. Since differences in cognitive abilities occur in college English layering teaching system, do emotional statuses of language learners differ too? The emotional differentiation is viewed from two angles. On one hand, those who lag behind in foreign language learning have strong sense of inferiority compared with the peers. Specifically, two groups of learners fall into this emotional difficulties. The first group of students who are in classes within C layer may be not comfortable catching up with others and are probably more likely to lose confidence in English language learning. The second group of students involve those who lag behind in classes within layer A, and their emotions are far from optimistic than we imagine. They are struck in a stressful and embarrassing situation that are less expected and their learning can be much helped by more concern and care from learning instructors. On the other, students who are among the best may be filled with sense of superiority over others. Learners considered at the top of all learners within layer C may be blind about what to do next and even lose desire to seek higher proficiency. It's the same to all students who are in classes within high layer and they are probably faced with the problem of being over-optimistic.

In a word, unhealthy emotions is not only detrimental to emotional development of English learners, but also hinder their cognitive development in language learning. Emotional differentiation of language learners should be stressed by instructors in language learning, so that learners will avoid coming to terms with a frustrating and stressful learning experience.

Strategic Solutions for Emotional Differentiation of College English Language Learners in Layering Teaching System

To think with more experience. It's wise for learners to get to know that emotions are independent variables and language learning is dependent on them. If they let emotions get in the way far too much during their time learning foreign language, the situation can only be worse. So what learners can do is to get better at dealing with negative emotions, so that better cognitive outcomes could be achieved. And that's one part of solution, namely, the self-awareness learners have to possess to recognize the impact that emotions have on themselves. Besides, learning is a process replete with negative and positive emotions. Learners should get used to the idea that learning another language, or even living in the world, will at times be uncomfortable and stressful. Everyone has to handle it, just in different ways. So the learner should not complain about not being

a lucky person, but rather think about how to overcome the mild or enormous difficulties encountered in language learning. It's just a matter of time and method for learners to harness the negative emotions and conquer unfavorable situations. This outlook and insight are essential for every language learner who want to grow and succeed. In a word, learners are expected to embrace their emotions and become more resilient to the challenges in language learning, so that they can be in a better position to increase their foreign language abilities in college English layering teaching system.

To take dynamic notice of emotions. Emotions are sometimes easier to be observed, however, sometimes difficult to determine because the emotional range and control of the learner varies by many factors. Particularly, the adult learner who is expected to have more control over emotions can sometimes deceive, and teachers have hard time figuring out the real inner world of the learner. How to take dynamic notice of emotions? Learners are encouraged to talk about their emotions and listen to the feeling of the peers in the process of language learning, so that learners can take note of emotions of others and have better understanding of theirs. For example, learners who have an embarrassing and frustrating time in class within layer A can be asked where their anxieties come from, and what help are needed by them. Those dialogues and interaction assist learners in maintaining a clear and focused mind of their emotions, and enable instructors to make judgments about when emotions of learners are interfering with or supporting learning. Thus language students can make their emotions work for them and not against them. In sum, through close observation and effective interaction, learners' emotions in social interactions can be noticed and understood by teachers in college English layering teaching system.

To harness the power of emotions. If you have difficulty managing your emotional health, do not jump to the worst conclusion. Actually regulating emotions can be learned step by step with guidelines. First, learners should be armed with strategies that will decrease the pain of the language learning journey, and keep learners stay calm and unflappable even under stressful situations. It's agreed that learners are more willing to feel less pain, less discomfort, less embarrassment and less fear, but the methods adopted by them to cope with unhappiness should be appropriate as opposed to inappropriate. Since not all emotions hinder the process of language learning, learners have to distinguish more specific positive feelings than negative ones. At the same time, negative emotions and impulsive behavior should be under control by language learners. Besides, people are encouraged to pick themselves up from where they tripped over. Now that learners see how connected cognition and emotion are, learners should cope with the cognitive difficulties where emotions are generated and get to the root of emotional problems at hand. In other words, body has to work to become in-tune with emotional health. For instance, students unable to catch up with the peers should get rid of the stress and depression through working out action plans pertinent to cognitive improvement. The people best able to regulate their feelings are the ones who can make out manageable action plans according to specific emotional situations. In sum, benefits of harnessing the power of emotions may accrue by language learners though managing their difficulties with emotional and cognitive health.

To create an emotionally safe environment. The paramount duty teachers need to work on is to create a positive classroom climate in which students feel secure and willing to participate in learning a foreign language. The key is to help learners avoid anxiety and boost confidence by adding flexibility and ease to the college English layering teaching system. For instance, learners can have a better control about which courses they are willing to partake and which teachers they like to learn with. Learners are different in many fields. Some people may be able to quickly process new information and make a decision while others take their time to assess the situation and decide. Loose assessment (especially the application of formative assessment) should also be incorporated into the college English layering teaching system so that learners can take risks and develop confidence. Moreover, activities that emphasize social interaction and that engage the entire body tend to provide the most emotional support. Thus group works and cooperative activities should be designed in the college English layering teaching system. Leveraging our own and others' emotions is good for carrying out more responsibilities and reaching high aspirations. In

a word, many factors in the learning environment play a part in cultivating appropriate use of emotional skills. Thereby teachers should consider how to create emotionally safe learning environments in which foreign language skills of learners can be shaped and developed.

Summary

The main conclusion emerging from this research is that emotional differentiation of language learners should not be underestimated and neglected in college English language layering teaching system, and more endeavors and energies should be directed towards building a countermeasure mechanism in foreign language learning. It's argued that emotional differentiation of college English language learners can be solved through thinking with more experience, taking dynamic notice of emotions, harnessing the power of emotions, and creating an emotionally safe environment in the college English layering teaching system. The findings of this study also suggest that people who master these things be more likely to be in a better position to manage and leverage their emotions, and thereby achieve both emotional and academic developments in the process of foreign language learning.

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