

Research on Evaluation of the Under-achievers in College English Learning

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Abstract

Evaluation plays a significant part in the instruction and learning. In the course of education's development, a great number of evaluation methods have already been proposed by scholars. However, most of them always focus on the whole evaluation system or those researches are only suitable for the majority of students. And studies relevant to the evaluation method of the under-achievers in the foreign language learning are very little. This paper is to overview evaluation of language learning and study the evaluation which is academically and psychologically beneficial to under-achievers' College English learning.

Key Words: evaluation; college English learning; under-achievers

Introduction

Evaluation can ensure the attainment of the curriculum objectives, contributing to monitor, guide, encourage and promote instruction and learning. With the assistance of evaluation, teachers learn about the progress and education status of the students. According to the evolution of language evaluation, in the earliest stage the form of language evaluation is just language testing. At a later time, there are some other evaluation methods without tests that consist of portfolio, observation, conference etc. Generally speaking, during the period of the development of evaluation a great number of assessment theories and methods have been proposed, and numerous studies about evaluation and evaluation method have been done. Nevertheless, previous researches involve little evaluation of the under-achievers in College English learning. In reality, many under-achievers are not necessarily unfit to learn language or they aren't able to make achievement in language learning. The truth is their potential for language can't be explored under the existed evaluation that is for all the students.

1. The development of evaluation

1.1 The role of evaluation of learning

Many years practice and researches have showed that educational evaluation is an indispensable part in the process of education management, and a sound educational evaluation can improve the quality of

instruction and promote the deepening of education reform. In the education evaluation, it is the evaluation of learning that is closely associated with the students' learning and teachers' teaching. Black maintains that evaluation and assessment provides foundation for selection, certification of student achievement, accountability of the education system through comparison of results, and the promotion of learning through provision of helpful feedback (Black, 1993). It can diagnose, guide, identify and encourage the students' further learning. Departments concerned and government consider the results of learning evaluation as important information used to make decisions and plans in relation to education. Therefore, a reasonable and scientific evaluation method of learning needs to be developed.

1.2 Evolution of evaluation

Educational evaluation always develops with the main line of instructional evaluation. With the deepening of the researches on educational evaluation, the scope of its study is gradually expanded to teacher evaluation, school evaluation, education manager evaluation etc. The development process of educational evaluation can mainly be divided into the following four stages.

1.2.1 Measurement stage

The first stage of evaluation is measurement stage which is from the late 19th to the 1930's. In this period, evaluation mainly depended on testing, with a value orientation of education noumenon. In the historic background of pursuing the scientification and objectivity of evaluation, a large number of educational tests were widely applied to educational evaluation.

1.2.2 Description stage

After the "testing stage", the following twenty years is description stage which considered as the emerging and formation period. At this stage, Tyler first differentiated testing and evaluation, and proposed goal-based evaluation model.(Yi jianlong&Xu guojiang,2002) What's more, he also made description and application of evaluation. During this period, education evaluation was objective-targeted, and the value switched into the social needs.

1.2.3 Judgment stage

This stage began from 1950 to 1970. The most noticeable things in this period are the emergence of educational objectives classification and new education model. During this time, Bloom's Taxonomy made up some shortcomings of Tyler Mode in different degrees. Simultaneously, various scholars also criticized the flaws of Tyler Mode such as the goal-free model.(Yi jianglong&Xu guojiang, 2002)

1.2.4 Construction stage

The evaluation entered the construction stage from 1970.The evaluation of this period embodies multi-orientation of individual needs which is more humanistic. Due to the reflection of researchers and scholars, evaluation concept changed. Guba and Lincoln first interpreted the core of instructional evaluation is value judgment and proposed negotiative and

psychological constructive model of evaluation. (Yi jianlong & Xu guojiang, 2002)At this stage, the evaluation was deemed to be a process of psychological construction through negotiation of evaluator and the evaluated.

2. Current situation of evaluation in university

2.1 Problems in current situation of evaluation in university

Generally speaking, the current evaluation system is incomplete. There are still some flaws and shortcomings in present framework of assessment. In addition, quite a few educators and educational administrators actually have a misunderstanding for the goal of evaluation and its function. In such perspectives as assessment subject, standard of evaluation, evaluation method, the following questions remain.

2.1.1 Unilateral evaluation subject

As a matter of fact, the most frequently used evaluation types in instruction and learning are formative evaluation and summative evaluation. On one hand, in terms of formative evaluation, the subject is mainly instruction insiders for a long time. In university, the formative evaluation is all implemented by teachers, ignoring the principal position of students. However, besides the teacher, the more important assessor in formative evaluation should be the students. Hence, formative evaluation should also encourage students to conduct self-assessment and peer-assessment. On the other hand, in the view of summative evaluation, the subject is always mainly made up with education experts and some instructional external members. Thus, it leads to such a phenomenon that government assesses schools, school evaluates teachers and teacher evaluates students. (Wang Min, 2007)

2.1.2 Single standard of evaluation

It is not difficult to understand that different regions and cities have different education resources and features. Of course, various students also have various talents. Yet, the evaluation standard is nationally applied to the students all over the country. Compared with the students in rural areas, those from the urban areas or big cities have a greater opportunity to get access to excellent education resources. To make matters worse, a growing number of college graduates' talent and strength haven't been exerted as a result of the single standard of evaluation, which is more far away from the primary aim of the evaluation.

2.1.3 Too much emphasis on the summative evaluation

Summative evaluation is generally a value judgment of some course after implementation of an educational program. It usually ranks the students in the form of scores, which has a bad influence on the physical and mental development of the students. This sort of examination evaluation system cultivates just a few winners but numerous losers, and violates the law of education and students' physical and mental development.(Wang Min, 2007) Most of the previous assessors only emphasis the summative

evaluation, focus more on the testing scores. Teachers and even the students themselves consider the grade as their achievement of the course. In that case, the instruction and learning gradually turns to be a test-oriented activity, losing the meaningfulness of the evaluation.

2.1.4 Reflection of the evaluation of college students in China

Based on the evolution of evaluation and the problems in current situation of evaluation, there comes a very critical and serious thing that a good evaluation of students should, at least, pay more attention to the physical and mental development of the students. A scientific assessment and evaluation system should not only focus on the intelligent development of students but also their emotional experience. Beyond that, it's particularly noteworthy that students play a dual role of assessors and assesses in the process of the formative evaluation. Additionally, in perspective of evaluation standard, due to the regional differences and individual differences among students, a more multi-oriented standard is terribly needed, which is beneficial to develop the students' talent which is useful to their future work, and to contribute to realizing education equity.

3. Evaluation of the under-achievers in college English learning

3.1 Definition of under-achiever

In 1960s, American scholar S.Kirk first put forward the concept of "under-achiever". OuYang Jianwei, a famous Chinese educator also gives following definitions of under-achiever. In his eye, the tradition definition of under-achiever refers to those students who are deficient in some aspect. In some cases, they are also called "backward students". Another definition sounds more euphemistic, saying that an under-achiever means one who just temporarily drops behind with potential to make progress. (Chen Xiaochan, 2011) In this sense, under-achievers in English learning are the students who are backward for the moment in English learning but able to make further progress.

3.2 Causes of underachievement in college English learning

In general, the underachievement in college English learning has subjective internal factors and objective external ones. The internal reasons are mainly relevant to the students' attitude, motivation, and strength of will and character etc. And the external causes principally manifested in the English learning environment of students, teaching concept of teachers and teaching methods.

Through the analysis of internal causes, the under-achievers in college English learning didn't lay a solid foundation of English before. What's more, such students usually fail to find an effective learning method which is suitable to them. To make matters worse, they even feel that the elementary knowledge and skills are that boring and tedious. Consequently, they will lose confidence and enthusiasm of study in the course of time. Later, after entering university, they are less likely to learning English actively in that English has nothing to do with their majors in their eyes.

Similarly, according to the analysis of the external reasons, it's not difficult to find that the exam-oriented

education mode and college entrance examination system have both seriously had bad effects on their further English study in college. In junior and high school, teachers simply make knowledge training and adopt excessive assignments tactic in pursuit of enrollment quotas and grade, which eventually causes students have learning-weariness mind in college English study. Besides, since the studying in university is relatively easy and flexible, the students with low self-control ability easily tend to be slack off.

3.3 Enlightenment on the evaluation of under-achievers in college English learning

As previously said, under-achievers are merely temporarily backward. They do have, to some extent, a great potential to make progress. Moreover, the reasons of their underachievement in learning partly attribute to the incomplete evaluation. Yet, it is a complex and time-consuming reform to establish a new evaluation system which is suitable to all the students. Hence, a better choice to solve the problem is the establishment of a scientific one that is special for those under-achievers in college English learning.

In perspective of the students' primary motivation of English learning, the evaluation should pay more attention to the emotional experience of the students rather than simply emphasize the academic achievement. A scientific and reasonable evaluation is beneficial to the physical and mental development of students. According to the educational viewpoints of Humanism, teaching must have real individual meaning. The humanists propose that students' individual needs and feelings are supposed to be respected and the learning with real individual meaning should be emphasized.(Williams & Burden, 1997) Only when the students aren't reluctant to study can they develop their maximum potential to catch up others. In fact, the majority of the under-achievers in English learning do not hate English in the beginning. They just can't stand the ways of teaching or tasks which they aren't good at. Therefore, the evaluation of under-achievers in college learning should take the primary motivation into consideration.

From the point of employment, not all the jobs associated with English demand sophisticated skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For instance, an excellent translator may don't do well in speaking or listening. Similarly, a student who fails to pass the final English exam or CET4/CET6 doesn't mean he/she can't be a good interpreter. In this sense, the evaluation of under-achievers in college English should consider to focus on such single aspect of English ability as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, it isn't only able to build their confidence but also to arouse their enthusiasm of English learning.

Conclusion

This study briefly reviews the development of evaluation, and analyses the current situation of evaluation in university. Apart from that, in the third part of this paper, it gives some enlightenment on the evaluation of under-achievers in college English learning. From the study, it's easy to find that the current evaluation still has some problems which badly need to be solved. Besides, the previous researches involve little the evaluation of under-achievers in College English learning. Nevertheless, the under-achievers are the group of people who are full of potential. Given more attention to them, the

overall level of college English will be increased. In the process of instruction, the educators should be concerned about both the academic achievement and the emotional experience. In the view of humanistic, schools and teachers should focus on the physical and mental development of students. More importantly, the objective of evaluation is actually not selection but realization of promoting the individual development. Therefore, it's necessary to establish an evaluation especially for under-achievers in English learning.

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