

The Strategies to Improve Self-efficacy of University Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract: This paper explores the strategies to improve self-efficacy of university foreign language teachers. The study covers three strategies, encompassing enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and competence, improving teachers' cooperation and communicative competence and improving teachers' emotion management. The three strategies can be adopted to improve the self-efficacy of university foreign language teachers.

1. Introduction

Teachers play an indispensable role in education. For students, teachers serve as the mentors and facilitators; For schools, they act as the organizers and managers; For themselves, they are the reflectors and researchers. Teachers' self-efficacy directly affects their sense of identity and satisfaction with the teaching profession, which is evaluated by themselves. Teachers' self-efficacy affects their professional cognition and identity, and also indirectly affects students' education and teaching work of the school. Therefore, this paper mainly discusses the strategies to improve university foreign language teachers' self-efficacy, in order to provide some useful suggestions for teachers' development.

2. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a core concept in the social learning theory proposed by Bandura, an American social learning psychologist. It refers to "an individual's degree of confidence in his or her own behavior ability in a specific situation, that is, whether or to what extent he or she believes that he or she has enough ability to complete a specific activity task". Self-efficacy is a self-perception and self-schema of an individual's ability. That is, people believe they have the ability to act correctly and effectively in a given situation.[1] Self-efficacy theory overcomes the tendency of traditional psychology to emphasize action over desire and knowledge over emotion. It is of great research value to study people's motivation by combining people's needs, emotions and cognition. Since the birth of the concept of self-efficacy, it has attracted the attention of researchers in various fields and conducted a lot of research on the theory and application of self-efficacy. In the field of education, its research is mainly reflected in teaching and learning, namely teachers' self-efficacy and students' self-efficacy in learning.

Teacher self-efficacy is an important topic in the field of teacher psychology research. This concept is a new one based on Bandura's self-efficacy and combined with the characteristics of teachers' work. Armor and Berman are the first scholars to study this new concept. They believe that teachers' self-efficacy includes two aspects: one is teaching efficacy, which refers to teaching results. In the teaching process, teachers will estimate the influence of teaching on students, so as to evaluate their own teaching ability; The second is personal efficacy, pointing to individual ability. Teaching activities need strong expression ability, knowledge accumulation, scientific research spirit and so on. Teachers' evaluation of their comprehensive ability is personal efficacy.[2] Ashton's research shows that teachers with high self-efficacy have high expectations for students, they are responsible for the growth of students, and they have the ability to teach all students well. Yu Guoliang and LuoXiaolu have put forward that teachers will evaluate their ability to complete teaching activities and achieve teaching objectives, so as to obtain self-efficacy. Li Weixing believes that college teachers' career self-efficacy is related to their teaching attitudes, behaviors and choices. Shao Siyuan proposes that teacher self-efficacy is a teacher's perception and examination of self-teaching ability, which plays an important role in teacher's own development. According to Jiang Lina and Wu Quanbing, teachers' self-efficacy is a kind of rich self-feeling, which contains various contents such as teaching process, result and value and is teachers' self-belief and judgment on all teaching behaviors. [3]

3. The Strategies to Improve Self-efficacy of University Foreign Language Teachers

Some strategies are provided for improving the self- efficacy of university foreign language teachers, as well as preventing and alleviating their occupational burnout.

3.1 Enhancing Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Competence

In the first place, university foreign language teachers are supposed to improve their abilities in analyzing the teaching materials. Before the class, teachers ought to figure out the content the students will study, the objectives and the difficult and important points of the lesson. Based on that, teachers can choose suitable classroom teaching strategies according to students' language level. They should not only focus on good students, but also take care of students with learning difficulties in language and encourage them to actively participate.

In addition, university foreign language teachers should also improve their ability in classroom management, including adaptability, organizational skills, and language skills. In class teaching, teachers are also required to handle all kinds of unexpected situations, try to find out students' difficulties in learning language and to adjust the teaching process according to students' response. Besides, to have a good control of the lesson, teachers must be able to change teaching methods flexibly according to various conditions. Teachers can also use a combination of various teaching methods, to make the classroom atmosphere active and easily controlled. With the help of advanced teaching media, such as multimedia method, the teaching content can be more vivid and intuitive. And teachers should highlight the key and difficult points, the amount of information in the courseware should be moderate.[4] As for classroom teaching language, it is supposed to be instructive. To arouse students' active thinking, help to guide the student to be independent, and take the initiative to acquire knowledge, classroom teaching language should also be vivid so as to arouse the students to create thinking, triggering students rich imagination.

3.2 Improving Teachers' Cooperation and Communicative Competence

Communicate with others and learning from other people's experience and thoughts can help to ease the negative emotion. Generally speaking, university foreign language teachers' interpersonal relationships include the relationship with colleagues, relationship with students, as well as the relationship between teachers and school leaders.

To improve cooperation and communication ability, university foreign language teachers ought to pay attention to the advantages of communication. On one hand, a harmonious interpersonal relationship can be established by communicating with others, so that teaching activities can be carried out smoothly. On the other hand, by communicating with others, teachers can better understand others' thoughts, reflect their teaching and improve their teaching work.

3.3 Improving Teachers' Emotion Management

Teachers' emotion is important in the teaching process. It will affect students' learning and thinking. Teachers who have good mood are more active and they can accurately express their own opinions and knowledge they want to teach. Before each lesson, university foreign language teachers can reflect on their own emotional state and throw away bad feelings for the time being. When encountering emergencies in the daily teacher-student interaction, they should calmly think about the issues and try to understand and tolerate students. In the process of teaching, it is sometimes necessary to naturally reveal certain emotions, especially positive emotions. For some negative emotions that come from life or work, teachers must learn to suppress them and patiently solve these problems and these negative emotions cannot be expressed in front of students. [5]Excellent teachers never lose enthusiasm for their profession. Students feel this energy and teachers who project it are much more successful than those who do not.

University foreign language teachers should fully realize various stresses that they will suffer in their daily life and work. When facing difficulties, teachers should be positive and optimistic. In addition, it is important for teachers to take regular physiological training and keep a balanced diet for it is a great way to prevent unnecessary stress. They can try various ways to relax themselves, such as doing some reading, developing a wide range of interests and hobbies and regular participation of outdoor activities. And teachers can also do more physical exercises like running, walking, yoga, etc. As long as they well realize pressures and keep a healthy life style, they can keep a good mood no matter what kind of pressures they are encountered with.

4. Conclusion

Teachers' self-efficacy is a dynamic development process with the self-cognition deepening, which can be improved through certain ways and means, and can be developed in a beneficial environment. Therefore, the three strategies, enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and competence, improving teachers' cooperation and communicative competence and improving teachers' emotion management can be adopted to improve the self-efficacy of university foreign language teachers.

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