Research on the Application of Implicit Stratified English Teaching in Universities

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Abstract: In recent years, with the rapid development of universities, the student population has been increasing, resulting in a more diverse student body. Simultaneously, as society progresses, the demand for talented individuals is also on the rise, necessitating students to possess strong professional skills and comprehensive qualities. This places higher demands on university education. However, each student in the student body has unique learning situations and characteristics. Some people excel in critical thinking and creativity, which poses a significant challenge for college English teachers. In the current era, stratified teaching models have garnered attention. This teaching approach is categorized into explicit and implicit stratified teaching, with the latter receiving acclaim and demonstrating positive outcomes in practice. This article delves into university English teaching, examining the implementation of implicit stratified teaching models in the teaching practices of this subject, with the goal of offering insights for creating effective classrooms and elevating the quality and standards of university English teaching.

1. Research background

With the ongoing evolution of educational reforms, higher education in our nation is gradually shifting from elite education to mass education. In recent years, universities have been increasing enrollment, resulting in a continuous rise in the student population. However, the overall quality also varies, highlighting the conflict between "teaching" and "learning" in the advancement of higher education. According to the zone of proximal development theory, education strives to establish the "zone of proximal development" for all students, enabling them to reach their full potential. Implicit stratified teaching follows the principle of teaching based on students' abilities and aims to establish a "zone of proximal development" for each student, assisting them in maximizing their potential to the fullest extent[1]. Nevertheless, due to teachers' limited capacity, it is challenging to individualize instruction for every student and support them in maximizing their potential.

Many researchers argue that implementing targeted teaching activities and methods tailored to the English learning differences of university students can effectively enhance their overall language application skills and promote autonomous learning, ultimately increasing their interest in learning English. To move away from the limitations of traditional exam-focused education and encourage the widespread adoption of quality education, it is crucial for each student to derive value

from their learning experience and make substantial advancements based on their current English proficiency. This necessitates a personalized approach for each student, considering the unique characteristics of various educational stages and teaching methods, while also acknowledging the practical implications of professional specialization and actively addressing the individual growth and developmental needs of students. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the use of implicit stratified teaching in some universities may have drawbacks, such as impacting students' mindset and hindering the creation of a collaborative learning environment. In such cases, implicit stratified teaching becomes essential[2].

2. Implicit stratified teaching

Implicit stratified teaching requires teachers to maintain consistent administrative classes, refrain from explicitly tiering students during instruction, and instead define the tiers internally. This involves grouping students of similar levels without disclosing the tiering information to students. Teachers must possess a solid understanding of an internal scale to effectively manage the tiers, establish teaching objectives, plans, and evaluation methods tailored to meet the diverse learning needs of students at different levels. It is essential to consider students' intelligence, interests, and potential when dividing them into various levels. Throughout the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to individual differences among students, particularly cognitive factors and learning motivation. While college students often struggle with their English foundation, it is crucial not to label them as "poor students." Explicit tiering can negatively impact students' confidence and self-esteem, potentially leading to a disinterest in English learning or even abandonment of the subject. Therefore, prioritizing students' emotions is vital, highlighting the significant advantages of implicit stratified teaching in this aspect[3].

Implicit stratified teaching is a model of stratified teaching that involves interactive classroom teaching at various levels. This method maintains the original administrative class structure and, based on the actual levels and characteristics of high, medium, and low-level students during the teaching process, establishes different teaching goals, uses various teaching and tutoring methods, sets different levels of assessment, allowing students at each level to fully develop. The specific approach usually involves: grouping students after identifying differences, setting teaching goals based on those differences, catering to all students' individual needs, assessing at different levels in stages, ultimately leading to developmental evaluation to promote continuous improvement in students. Every English teacher considers and explores effective methods to enhance English classroom teaching. Implicit stratified teaching can better address the contradictions in English teaching mentioned above and is worth researching and practicing. The main difference between implicit stratified teaching and traditional stratified teaching is the absence of fast-track or slow-track classes; it retains the natural class structure, keeps students' stratification information confidential, focuses on student progress internally, encourages students more, helping them gain confidence in learning English while also respecting the self-esteem of students at intermediate and lower levels, emphasizing the understanding of students' different psychological characteristics to meet the needs of each student level. implicit stratified teaching is a concealed form of stratification, with the significant advantage of creating a positive environment and conditions to spark interest and enthusiasm for learning among all students, maximizing the development of students' potential, increasing the likelihood of success and recognition for every level of student, particularly those at lower levels[4].

Through research, implementing implicit stratified teaching helps develop students' multiple intelligences. In the current context of quality education development, there is a growing emphasis on students' active role in teaching activities, shifting them from traditional passive learning to

active learning. Students' active participation can also influence teaching effectiveness. This teaching method, tailored to individual needs without compromising students' self-esteem, carries significant benefits.

3. Problems in college English teaching

3.1 The unreasonable basis of stratification

Many universities utilize students' scores on the college entrance examination in English to guide differentiated instruction, or they administer a diagnostic test at the start of the semester to evaluate students' English proficiency and tailor instruction accordingly. Some institutions also differentiate instruction based on students' chosen major courses. However, the effectiveness of differentiation based on scores and majors is not substantial. This transparent form of differentiation can also demotivate students at lower to mid-levels, leading to feelings of inadequacy and disinterest in learning, eroding their study confidence[5].

Furthermore, this stratified classification does not accurately represent students' learning abilities and traits. For example, some students may not excel in the college entrance exam or diagnostic tests but exhibit strong learning capabilities and display great potential in their daily English classes. Conversely, some students may perform well in exams but lack motivation in their regular studies, absorbing new material slowly with lower comprehension skills. Some students may find the content too simple, while others may struggle to grasp it. Relying on explicit criteria like test scores and academic performance for stratified teaching may be more convenient than implicit methods, but it lacks rationality, a scientific basis, and overlooks students' psychological well-being. This poses a significant challenge that many universities encounter in advancing English teaching.

3.2 Lack of the specific teaching goal

College education is known for its strong specialization compared to other types of schools. Many colleges prioritize professional courses as key teaching content, emphasizing the application and practice of professional English in English teaching. The teaching focus is placed on the practicality of English. However, this teaching approach does not align with fundamental educational principles and lacks a specific standard despite the emphasis on the practicality of English by teachers. Consequently, current college English teaching lacks a clear teaching objective, making the implementation of implicit stratified teaching significantly more challenging. Without scientific and systematic teaching objectives, the effectiveness of implicit stratified teaching is greatly reduced, rendering the stratified teaching meaningless. This failure to enhance students' learning abilities effectively leads to a waste of classroom teaching time.

3.3 Lack of innovation in teaching methods and ideas

Implicit stratified teaching aims to provide targeted teaching based on students' diverse learning situations and characteristics, ultimately enhancing their academic performance and overall quality. To effectively implement this approach, teachers must appropriately tailor the teaching content. However, traditional educational models, university management systems, and teaching resources often hinder teachers from effectively differentiating the content. Unsuccessful content differentiation can have severe consequences, impacting teaching progress, quality, students' graduation, and future career development[6]. Relying heavily on textbooks and lacking diverse teaching methods can make the content dull, reducing students' learning interests and motivation, thus challenging teachers to improve students' English proficiency in the classroom. The primary

goal of learning English is not merely memorizing words or achieving high scores but enabling students to proficiently apply English in their daily lives. English teaching should focus on students utilizing the knowledge learned in the classroom in real-life situations. However, many universities prioritize enhancing students' professional skills over their English language proficiency and practical application of English in daily life. English classes often lack an engaging learning atmosphere and sufficient exposure to English knowledge, presenting a significant challenge for English teaching in universities when implementing implicit stratified teaching.

4. The implementation method of implicit stratified teaching in college English

4.1 Categorization of students in layers

Implicit stratified teaching model no longer bases class division on students' academic performance and ability, but focuses on the internal dynamics of the class. It analyzes and interprets students' learning abilities and growth directions to carry out stratification and grouping tasks. In this model, students' academic performance is no longer the sole criterion. For English teaching in universities, before implementing the implicit stratified teaching model, students' free grouping must be the foundation. Then, based on the current grouping situation, different teaching tasks are implemented. Teachers need to take a macro perspective to ensure that each group achieves balance and consistency, fully demonstrating the important role and advantages of implicit stratified grouping. Student grouping within the class is not primarily based on rigid and fixed patterns but requires flexible adjustments and optimizations based on students' learning abilities and participation, ensuring that students have increased opportunities for autonomous learning and practice.

4.2 Stratification of teaching objectives

The main teaching objective is to understand students' implicit stratified teaching, which involves gaining a comprehensive understanding of students' learning foundations and levels. For students with a strong foundation, teachers can increase the teaching difficulty appropriately beyond the basic objectives, delve deeper into the subject matter, and incorporate relevant professional English knowledge. For students with a weaker English foundation, teachers should offer methodological guidance to help them achieve the basic learning objectives and improve their learning efficiency continuously. In summary, for students at different levels, it is important to motivate them to enhance their learning enthusiasm, continually challenge themselves, cultivate habits of autonomous learning, and facilitate improvement upon their existing knowledge base.

4.3 The stratification of teaching content

Teaching content also needs to be personalized based on the different levels of students, which is often referred to as teaching according to their aptitude, a key aspect to ensure the quality of differentiated instruction. It is essential to select appropriate English materials according to students' overall learning abilities and levels as English learning involves various aspects such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills that students need to enhance. For students with a good foundation, more comprehensive materials can be chosen to primarily develop their language application skills; whereas for students with weaker basics, foundational materials can be used to start with basic vocabulary and grammar. By adopting a differentiated instruction approach, students are divided into multiple groups based on their proficiency levels. Students with a strong foundation focus on honing their English expression and application skills, while those with weaker

basics mainly work on developing their language perception abilities. Furthermore, it is crucial to make targeted adjustments to the teaching content during different teaching periods, incorporating the actual learning situations of students and conducting timely assessments of their learning progress.

4.4 The variety of teaching test means

Based on the stratification of teaching content and teaching targets, it is unreasonable to use a single evaluation method. Therefore, different testing methods should be adopted for different teaching contents to understand the learning situations of students at different levels. It is mainly based on students' learning, focusing on evaluating the basic knowledge acquisition of students with weaker foundations, while testing the language application skills of students with stronger foundations. A tailored approach and diversified evaluation methods are essential for students to recognize their progress and further motivate their learning enthusiasm.

4.5 Hierarchy of teaching objectives

To truly maximize the effectiveness of implicit stratified teaching, teachers should establish scientifically reasonable teaching objectives when implementing this approach. The setting of teaching goals should be based on students' basic learning situations, allowing students to maintain their initiative under tight learning pressures. The objectives should not be overly ambitious or too modest. Furthermore, when setting teaching objectives, teachers should adhere to the current teaching guidelines as the standard and not deviate from the educational system in universities; otherwise, it may backfire. In implementing differentiated teaching objectives, teachers should also pay attention to students' different learning characteristics and tailor teaching plans that benefit balanced development based on individual student differences. For example, for students who enjoy reading, teachers can provide more reading comprehension exercises to enhance their English proficiency; for students with a strong practical orientation, teachers can offer more practical exercises to help them improve their English grades.

4.6 Stratification of evaluation methods

Teachers should not solely evaluate students based on final grades or national English exams, but should establish different requirements based on students' learning abilities and characteristics, adhering to the principles of differentiation, timeliness, and encouragement to achieve the significance of stratified evaluation. Teachers can create online records to document the characteristics and learning situations of students at different levels during different learning periods, periodically analyzing and conducting comprehensive evaluations of these records. This evaluation method is more scientific and reasonable than traditional end-of-term grading methods. When evaluating, teachers should avoid incorporating their subjective preferences into the assessment criteria. For example, if a student at a certain level has recently performed exceptionally well but had poor performance before, the teacher's evaluation should not be influenced by past impressions to avoid undermining the student's learning confidence. Additionally, when implementing stratified evaluation methods, teachers should not place all students on the same starting line, as this would overlook the feelings of middle and lower-level students, contradict the concept of implicit stratified teaching, greatly reduce the scientific and rational nature of the evaluation results, and affect the effectiveness of implicit stratified teaching.

5. Conclusion

Implicit stratified teaching model in English teaching at universities is a complex and delicate task, requiring continuous practice and development in specific educational and teaching activities. Compared to traditional English teaching models, implicit stratified teaching in English has many advantages; it helps students build confidence, protect self-esteem, unlock learning potential, enabling students to experience the joy of learning and fostering a positive psychological acceptance of English learning, gradually forming a virtuous cycle to ensure that students of all levels can achieve gains and progress. Implicit stratified teaching in universities is a transformation of traditional English teaching methods, facing various challenges such as how to make the hierarchy objective and accurate, how to reduce the workload and difficulty of teachers in implicit stratified teaching, and how to stimulate positive cognitive factors in each student. Implicit stratified teaching in university English teaching aims to eliminate unfavorable conditions, create favorable conditions, and research how to maximize students' learning interests and develop their learning potential. It is a topic of profound significance that we need to constantly improve and innovate.

Implicit stratified teaching indeed alleviates the difficulty and intensity of teachers' work in many ways. While following the rules of language teaching, teachers must have a proactive innovative consciousness, use creative teaching to promote students' creative learning, enabling them to learn actively in an equal atmosphere; teachers need to fully and reasonably utilize modern teaching methods, enrich teaching content, optimize the teaching environment, and adjust teaching pace and rhythm. Teachers need to pay attention to the effective connection between theoretical analysis and practical research, understand students' learning abilities, analyze the stratified requirements of teaching objectives, fully demonstrate the important role and advantages of teaching evaluation, and create a good external space for teachers' teaching practice. However, currently, there are still many problems and shortcomings in the use of implicit stratified teaching, and English teachers should continue to summarize experiences, innovate teaching methods, timely adjust the methods of differentiated instruction, and achieve the purpose of implicit stratified teaching.

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