

Zone of Proximal Development Theory and College English Teaching

Yali Qiang

Guangdong University of Science & Technology, Dongguan 523000, China.

254894038@qq.com

Abstract

Zone of Proximal Development of Lev Vygotsky is a very important teaching theory and studying it is significant to English teaching. This paper summarizes the connotation of "Zone of Proximal Development" theory and explores its enlightenment to English teaching in the teaching object, teaching process and teaching methods.

Keywords

"Zone of Proximal Development", College English teaching, Vygotsky.

1. Introduction

Educational psychology is a science that explains the basic laws of the interaction between "learning" and "teaching" with scientific research methods. With the development of the society, all countries in the world have carried out educational reform to adapt to the global economic development. The diversification of the world economy is forcing the teaching and learning of English to be differentiated, presenting more and more new and scientific concepts of teaching and learning. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" theory is a representative one. The author presents his enlightenment to English teaching.

2. "Zone of Proximal Development" Theory

Vygotsky is an outstanding educator and psychologist in the early days of the Soviet union. The theory of "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) is one of the most concerned educational ideas in the cognitive development theory he has proposed in 1930s. He has defined it as "the gap between the actual level of development and the potential level of development. The former depends on the ability to solve problems independently and the latter refers to the ability to solve problems under the guidance of an adult or in cooperation with a more capable partner. "Zones of proximal development" has a more direct bearing on the process of intellectual development and success than at present levels. He believes that teaching "creates" the development of students. He argues that teaching should not depend on the child's yesterday, but on his tomorrow. Teaching should go ahead of the current development level of children, and only in front of the development, it is really a good teaching because it raises the potential level of development of children.

In fact, there is a "zone of proximal development" in all aspects of children's psychological development, so teaching should focus on the "zone of proximal development" of students, to improve the potential level of development of students. Although teaching is not the same as development, and it is impossible to determine development immediately, if the teachers not only consider the students' current development level from the teaching objective to the teaching process and then to the teaching method, but also put forward higher development requirements for students according to their "proximal development zone", it will be more beneficial to the overall development of students.

3. Zone of Proximal Development Theory and college English Teaching

3.1 Teaching Objects

Students are the objects of teaching, who have the "zone of proximal development". Teachers should study students, study students' current development level and potential development level, then find

the "zone of proximal development", and according to the students' "zone of proximal development", develop their own teaching plan. In teaching, we have been using the ancient "teaching students according to their aptitude", which was initiated by our educator, Confucius in the practice of education and teaching. The principle of "teaching students according to their aptitude" has been widely used in the education and teaching practice at various historical stages of China's development and has been gradually improved with the changes of the times. The introduction of the theory of "zone of proximal development" gives a new meaning to "teaching students according to their aptitude". Our interpretation of the traditional "teaching students according to their aptitude" is "according to the actual situation of the students, the implementation of the corresponding education". However, if we look at the traditional "teaching students according to their aptitude" through the "zone of proximal development", we will find that we should establish a new concept of teaching students according to their aptitude. In the "zone of proximal development", Vygotsky believes that if teaching is only based on students' actual development level, it is conservative and backward, and effective teaching should go ahead of students' current development level and drive development. Therefore, teachers should not only study students' current level of development, but also study their potential level of development to find their "zone of proximal development" and guide students to the highest level of development.

The teacher wants to study the student, and find the student "proximal development area". However, in the college English teaching concretely, how to find the student "proximal development area"? The author believes that before teaching students, students' actual development level can be tested by means of tests, questionnaires, dialogues and questions. Potential level of development refers to the ability to solve problems under the guidance of an adult or in cooperation with a more capable partner, that is, the level of development that a student can achieve after education. The gap between the two is the zone of proximal development. Since the difference between the level of students' independent problem solving and the level achieved under guidance is dynamic and constantly changing, teachers are required to study students' "zone of proximal development" in a dynamic assessment environment. In classroom teaching, teachers should consider the starting point of the class of college students, according to the end of the requirements of teaching objectives, analyze and predict students' learning difficulties, so as to accurately find the students' proximal development area. The zone of proximal development of different students, is also different, teachers in the classroom teaching should pay attention to this difference. Teaching at different levels can be carried out. For some top students, we can give them a "small focus", but for students with learning difficulties, because the teaching is beyond their "zone of proximal development", we need to give them more attention and guidance. In classroom teaching, more attention should be paid to these students with learning difficulties. Students can be placed in the zone of proximal development by dictating different contents, asking different questions and assigning different assignments.

3.2 Teaching Procedure

According to the theory of "zone of proximal development", teachers need to provide students with hierarchical learning materials and tasks that are suitable in their zone of proximal development. If the tasks assigned by teachers are too easy, students will think that they are not challenging and lose interests in learning. If the task assigned by the teacher to the students is too difficult, the students will have a sense of inferiority, thus losing the enthusiasm and confidence in learning. Therefore, teachers should assign different levels of learning materials and tasks according to students' actual conditions in the actual classroom teaching, and guide them to solve problems. In the whole teaching process, the teacher is no longer cramming the knowledge to the students and let the students passively accept the knowledge mechanically, but guides and assists the students to study actively. Teachers only play the role of "facilitator" and "helper", while students are the real protagonists of learning. Therefore, the teacher must change the past teaching concept of "monopolizing the stage and performing the one-man show", and leave more space and freedom for the students in the classroom teaching, so that the students can develop better. In the zone of proximal development, teachers are the designers, moderators and evaluators of teaching activities, as well as the role models,

advisers and interlocutors of students. "Zone of proximal development" is a dynamic and developing area, so teachers need to constantly get feedback on student development in the teaching process.

3.3 Teaching Methods

In the teaching process, the teacher must use certain teaching methods to complete the teaching task. The selection of teaching methods should also consider the "zone of proximal development". The zone of proximal development exists between what students know and what they don't know, between what they are capable of and what they are not capable of. It is an area where students need help to complete tasks.

Teachers can help students develop by "scaffolding", that is, scaffolding teaching. The purpose of learning scaffolding is to help students pass through the zone of proximal development and achieve higher development. With the help of bracket, the responsibility of monitoring learning and exploration is gradually transferred from the teacher to the students themselves, and finally the scaffolding is removed. In the application of scaffolding teaching, it is necessary to find a suitable scaffold that can keep students in their most recent development zone, and to make appropriate adjustments with the changes of students' cognitive development. Teaching bracket should not be too easy, not too difficult, teachers should be timely give timely removed, to avoid the emergence of dependence on students. This method has a subtle guiding effect on students' future independent learning, and they can adjust their learning through various ways. For example, it is difficult for students to design an English business conversation in class. The teacher can provide some business vocabulary as a support. Then the teacher reduces the vocabulary supply, and the students gradually learn to design various business dialogues.

The interaction between teachers and students in the "zone of proximal development" enables students to acquire problem-solving skills, that is, interactive teaching. It stresses that teaching must be "student-centered", including dialogue between teachers and students. The teacher provides real and meaningful learning materials and creates a real and natural learning environment. The teacher first demonstrates to the students and then asks the students to act as teachers in turn. For example, in the college English reading class, the author taught one lesson and then asked the students to explain the second lesson, with the purpose of cultivating the students' ability to learn English by themselves. The author did not expect that the students were highly motivated to give lectures on the platform, and the effect of the lectures was very good. To the author' surprise, there were many innovations in many aspects such as asking questions and explaining ways. The students not only improved their ability of self-study, but also learned a lot about English.

In the zone of proximal development, teachers can encourage students to work in groups. Teachers should try their best to arrange students with different levels of development for cooperative learning. The help and guidance of peers make students more receptive. Cooperative group learning is one of the most effective ways to promote the development of students in the zone of proximal development.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" theory has profound and rich implications for China's current college English teaching reform. With the continuous advancement of China's education and teaching reform, this theory will be enriched and precipitated in the new historical background, providing more beneficial enlightenment for China's education and teaching reform in the future.

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