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# Being People-oriented and Motivating Students to Realize Themselves -- the Enlightenment of Maslow's Humanistic Psychology to College English Education

Jing Huang

Yangtze University, School of Foreign Studies; Jingzhou Hubei 434000 China

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## Abstract

With the development of education reform in China, the way of College English education has changed. The traditional English teaching mode has been unable to adapt to development of the society, because teachers do not uphold the people-oriented teaching philosophy. But Maslow's Humanistic Psychology can well promote the college English teaching and guide students to develop healthily. At present, there are various problems in English teaching in China's colleges and universities, and thus teachers should be people-oriented to carry out innovative teaching methods in the course of teaching. This paper mainly focuses on the enlightenment of Maslow's Humanistic Psychology to college English education and then puts forward suggestions for problems in college English teaching combined with psychology.

## Keywords

People-oriented; Maslow's Humanistic Psychology; college English education.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, colleges and universities in China have paid more and more attention to quality-oriented education. Although any colleges and universities have implemented the quality-oriented education, the people-oriented teaching concept is not highlighted in the implementation. Students are still forced to accept knowledge in the teaching. There are seldom interactions between students and the teacher; boring classroom atmosphere is not conducive to students' learning. These are the facts directly related to teachers' teaching methods. In this case, improving the teaching quality of English teachers can solve these problems, while the implementation of Maslow's Humanistic Psychology has a positive effect on college English teaching.

## 2. Maslow's humanism

### 2.1 Being people-oriented is the base of teaching

Maslow pointed out that the current concept of education is to teach students to use knowledge in society, rather than improve their creativity and imagination. Schools should abandon this teaching concept. The education to students should not be limited to the surface but should focus on exploring their potential, because the purpose of college education is supposed to shape students' full personality and positive attitude. Maslow stressed that special attention should be given to the positive factors of students in the process of education, so as to improve their comprehensive quality through education. Therefore, in the process of educating students, universities should combine theoretical knowledge with practice. And meanwhile, teachers should emphasize the advantages of students and develop their potential so as to make students' development conform to the requirements of society.

## **2.2 The Enlightenment of Maslow's Humanistic Psychology to college English education**

(1) The problem-centered theory. Maslow pointed out that the relationship between science and scientific method is not clear. The way to solve problems is only a means to achieve goals while psychology is mainly concerned with the meaning of human existence. College students often suffer ambivalence and other problems in their school life because of differences in learning methods, living habits, geographical culture and other aspects. Teachers need to apply the psychological counseling to improve students' interest in learning in the English classroom, making them give play to their own potential in English learning and then be used to the university life.

(2) The holistic dynamic theory. Maslow believed that psychology is composed of several parts, but there is a dynamic relationship between parts and the whole. When instructing students, teachers should well know their overall characteristics, judge their psychological structure and understand their ideas before implementing guidance and teaching.

## **2.3 The significance of Maslow's Humanistic Psychology for English teaching**

Maslow's Humanistic Psychology puts people first in studies. In the process of English teaching, educators should be people-oriented, respect students' main position in the classroom, excavate students' potential and cultivate students' comprehensive quality. This teaching method has a positive effect on students' personal development and comprehensive quality, and the implementation of humanism is helpful to promote the development of students and disciplines.

## **3. The present situation of college English teaching**

### **3.1 Outdated teaching methods**

At present, the methods of English teaching in China's colleges and universities are outdated and cannot adapt to the development of students. In spite of the rapid development of society, teachers still use traditional teaching methods. They instill theoretical knowledge into the students, making the English class more boring. Teachers do not initiate interactions with students in class, do not respect students' subjectivity in class and also cannot adjust the course design and teaching contents according to the actual situation of students. The purpose of college English teaching is to make students be able to use English accurately and expertly, but teachers do not take the students' development as the teaching goal in the actual teaching process. This traditional teaching method is not conducive to the development of students.

### **3.2 Too much attention to students' academic performance**

University is the place to cultivate the comprehensive quality of students. However, influenced by exam-oriented education, teachers attach too much importance to students' scores while ignoring the training of students' comprehensive quality, and they also do not try to explore students' potential in the teaching process. Teachers are accustomed to taking academic achievements as the only standard to evaluate their students, but it is no doubt that it is a kind of injury to the students. This teaching method is not conducive to students' physical and mental development and will deepen their disgust in the subject. Furthermore, it also violates Maslow's people-oriented educational concept. Teachers should measure students in an all-round way and make reasonable evaluation on their comprehensive quality, so as to avoid the psychological burden on students because of improper evaluation.

### **3.3 Neglecting the mental health of students**

University teachers only pay attention to the students' academic performance and ignore their physical and mental health due to influences of the traditional teaching. In order to improve the students' academic performance, teachers exert pressure on the students without considering their' inner feelings. In the course of teaching, they pay too much attention to the explanation of English words and sentences while ignoring the students' application ability of English. In the long term depression, students will be bored with learning, and even have inferiority and negative attitude due to poor academic performance, which is not conducive to students' physical and mental development.

### **3.4 Superficial teaching**

College English is very difficult and covers extensive knowledge points, which also brings difficulties to teaching. Teachers do not explain the point of knowledge deeply in the course of teaching, so that it cannot arouse students' enthusiasm for learning. Because of the large number of academic language and profound contents in the language, students cannot master the knowledge points in a short time, and this also make it difficult to carry out the teaching. In addition, students do not have insufficient learning motivation due to the boring classroom atmosphere, which leads to the descending of education quality.

## **4. The people-oriented strategy in English education**

### **4.1 Guiding students to think about their needs**

Marx stated that people's activities are conscious. People's conscious initiative is different from that of animals. Human beings can control their emotions and what they want, and they are cognitively aware of the society. In teaching, teachers should also guide students to identify their goals, realize their maximum value in the scope of their consciousness and help them reflect on their activities. Teachers should also sort out their goals according to their needs, and then guide students to establish correct values, improve academic performance and further improve themselves.

### **4.2 Respecting students' low-level requirement**

Maslow divided human needs into five categories: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Maslow suggested that human beings have the need at a higher level only when their needs at the lower levels have been satisfied. Therefore, teachers should meet students' low-level needs in English teaching. Although the society development needs high-level mental strength, people will be separated from the group if their low-level needs are excluded. It is needed to combine the teaching goals with students' low-level needs, so as to enhance their comprehensive quality while improving their English performance. In the course of teaching, teachers should respect the personal needs of students, care for their learning and life and help them satisfy their needs through reasonable means and methods. In English teaching, teachers should take into account the needs of students and achieve their teaching purpose through teaching methods, so as to meet all kinds of needs of students and train their English application ability.

### **4.3 Guiding students to control their needs**

Maslow argued that people are not satisfied with the realization of needs. People often ignore the value of happiness when their needs have been met, which leads to the loss of people's values and negative attitude to life. Therefore, people should control their desires, put forward a reasonable preview to the needs and realize them according to the actual situation. In the process of teaching, teachers should guide students' needs and tell them not to merely satisfy their needs while pursuing goals, so as to make students be able to distinguish the reasonable requirements. In this way, students can achieve personal development in pursuing their own needs, thus strengthening the motivation of their own learning.

### **4.4 Encouraging students to pursue high-level needs**

Teachers should encourage students to pursue high-level need while respecting the students' low-level needs. By combing the learning goals, students can know what they want and how to improve their spiritual needs. In this process, students can reduce the fear of difficulties and achieve their high-level needs by solving problems. Teachers should care for the students' study and life when the students pursue their high-level need, so as to make the students develop in an all-round way.

## **5. Methods to improve the teaching level of college English**

### **5.1 Improving the teaching model**

The traditional modes of teaching are featured by the dominant position of teachers in the classroom and passive listening of students. Teachers, on various teaching levels, have few interactions with students in the teaching process and most of them cannot teach proceeding from the actual situation of students. In the course of teaching, teachers should guide students' learning of professional knowledge according to the present situation of college English teaching. Teachers can adjust the classroom teaching mode and teaching contents according to the actual situation and personal interests of the students while increasing the interactions in the class. It is necessary to adhere to the people-oriented teaching concept and respect students' dominant position in the classroom to participate in the students' learning process. Teachers can establish scientific research teams, encourage students to participate in the discussion actively and give suggestions on objective problems, so as to solve related problems.

### **5.2 Improving the comprehensive quality of teachers**

At present, university teachers in China are on various comprehensive educational levels and the comprehensive quality is low, which leads to the fact that teachers cannot impart knowledge to students in the teaching process and students also do not have good ability of applying English. Therefore, colleges and universities should improve the teaching level and professionalism of their teachers, regularly arrange teachers to go abroad to learn teaching experience and study oral English, so that teachers' professional level can be improved. It is necessary to apply strict examinations on teachers' English teaching and encourage them to gain related qualification certificates, so as to effectively improve the overall teaching level. In addition, this will also improve the English performance of the students and help them use English well.

### **5.3 Innovating methods of classroom teaching**

In the college education, the classroom teaching is a main channel for students to obtain knowledge and the teaching methods play an important role in the students' English performance. Traditional English classroom teaching methods cannot help students absorb knowledge well. Teachers should design and improve teaching methods according to the actual situation of students. For example, eclectic teaching, task-based teaching and communicative teaching can all be adopted to improve students' oral English and their ability to apply English, and thereby enhance their understanding and comprehensive ability of English. In the course of teaching, the change of teaching methods can improve students' interest in learning. For example, teachers can change the teaching methods in oral training and study together with the students. Situational teaching method is also very effective. Teachers are supposed to encourage students to play the characters in the story to practice their oral English. In college English teaching, teachers should follow student-led principle and appropriately improve teaching methods and teaching modes according to students' actual learning situation, so as to adapt to the development of society today.

## **6. Conclusion**

With the development of the new curriculum reform, humanism has become the core of the teaching. In the course of teaching, teachers should respect the student-centered teaching idea and guide the students to set up correct values and outlook on life. It is also important to encourage students to ask themselves according to the actual situation and achieve goals through their own efforts, thereby achieving high-level learning goals. In the course of teaching, English teachers should improve students' interest in learning and update the teaching contents in time, so that students can adapt to the development of the times. Maslow's humanism plays a good role in college English teaching. In the process of teaching, teachers should give full play to their subjective initiative and tap students potential to achieve the student-centered teaching idea.

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