

The Impact of Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition on English Writing Teaching

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Abstract: Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a multi-dimensional and dynamic process that is influenced by numerous factors. Individual differences are undoubtedly the most significant factor. Individual differences refer to the differences in cognitive levels, learning styles, motivation, and emotional attitudes among learners during the process of acquiring a second language. These differences have a significant impact on various aspects of language learning, and this is especially true in English writing teaching. English writing is a very complex language skill that involves students' language knowledge, as well as their certain thinking abilities, creativity, and expression levels.

Keywords: Second language acquisition; Individual differences; English writing teaching; Cognitive ability

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1. Introduction

Individual differences in second language acquisition refer to the overall characteristics of learners, including language ability, learning style, cultural background, emotional attitude, learning motivation, and cognitive strategies. Since there are obvious differences among learners in English writing learning, various factors have a significant impact on the results they show in learning English writing. Therefore, recognizing the impact of individual differences on English writing teaching is very important for English teachers. Teachers should adopt different teaching methods based on the characteristics of students and provide personalized guidance to each student, so that each student can make progress in English writing.

2. Dimensions of individual differences in second language acquisition

2.1. Cognitive differences

Cognitive differences play an important role in second language acquisition. They refer to the different ways of thinking that learners exhibit during the language learning process. These differences include language comprehension and processing abilities, the degree of concentration of attention, memory, reasoning ability, etc. There are people who have a strong ability to understand complex sentence structures and long articles, and there are also people who have weak vocabulary memory and grammar mastery. Cognitive differences will cause differences in students' abilities to use

language and arrange the structure of an article in writing. Therefore, for different students, teachers should provide corresponding learning resources and guidance methods to enable each student to improve their writing skills based on their characteristics.

2.2. Learning motivation differences

Learning motivation differences refer to the different internal driving forces and external incentives that students have in the learning process. Motivation differences are very important for second language acquisition. Students with stronger internal motivation generally have a strong interest and positive attitude in language learning and show it in English writing tasks. Students with weak motivation will lack interest and enthusiasm in writing and may even avoid writing tasks ^[1]. Teachers can design interesting and challenging writing tasks, give students positive feedback, and enhance classroom communication to improve students' writing interest and confidence.

2.3. Emotional differences

Emotional differences refer to the emotional reactions, anxiety, shame, and other emotional factors that learners show during the learning process. Emotional factors in second language acquisition can affect learning outcomes. Emotional anxiety generally refers to an emotion that people experience while learning about other second language knowledge. Anxiety is one of the most studied. Anxiety can be divided into two types: psychological character anxiety and actual situation anxiety. Different emotions will cause different performances in writing for students. Emotionally confident students can better express their ideas, while emotionally tense students are more likely to have self-doubt which can affect the expression of the article. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to students' emotional needs, create a supportive classroom atmosphere, and give students emotional encouragement to eliminate negative emotions and improve writing ability.

3. The specific impact of individual differences on English writing teaching in second language acquisition

3.1. Impact on writing skills

In second language acquisition, differences in cognition will lead to variations in the writing abilities formed by learners. Some students, despite having strong grammatical comprehension and vocabulary memory, still cannot write clear and accurate high-quality articles. The reason is that they have not established a complete language application system. Some students with relatively weak cognitive abilities may encounter more grammatical errors and unclear expressions when writing. Thus, students show different levels of writing skills. Teachers should consider the cognitive differences of students, change teaching methods, provide appropriate writing tasks, and adopt personalized guidance methods to help students improve their writing skills.

3.2. Impact on writing motivation

Learning motivation is a key factor influencing the development of students' writing ability. Students with stronger motivation show obvious positive attitudes towards English writing, actively participating in writing tasks, trying new methods, and putting in more effort during the writing process. On the contrary, students with weaker motivation have no interest in writing and tend to give up when encountering difficulties, which affects the quality of their writing. Therefore, teachers should design writing tasks that attract students' interest and provide positive feedback to improve students' writing motivation. At the same time, creating a positive learning environment can mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning, thereby promoting the development of students' writing.

3.3. Impact on writing emotions

Emotional differences will have a significant impact on English writing. Students with positive emotional states are more confident when writing, can clearly express their thoughts, and are less affected by anxiety. On the contrary, students with more anxiety or lack of confidence in writing will feel stressed and stop creating or encounter writing obstacles. Different emotions will lead to differences in article quality ^[2]. To overcome negative emotions, teachers should pay attention to creating a classroom atmosphere, using encouragement, support, and emotional resonance to help students build confidence, reduce writing anxiety, and thereby improve students' writing skills.

3.4. Impact on writing content and structure

The differences in students' cultural backgrounds will affect their writing content and the organization of the structure. Students from different cultural backgrounds have different thinking patterns and expression methods when writing. Some students use background descriptions to introduce the topic, while a few directly get to the point. In addition, some students place more emphasis on logic and argumentation, while others prioritize personal feelings and emotional expression. Teachers should consider these cultural differences when designing writing tasks and provide students with various writing frameworks to help them recognize and adapt to different writing styles, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural writing skills.

4. Teaching strategies to address individual differences

4.1. Personalized writing tasks

Based on students' different levels, motivations, and writing abilities, determine different personalized writing tasks. For students with strong language skills, give them more challenging writing tasks, allowing them to use complex sentence structures and rich vocabulary. For students with weaker cognitive abilities, design some simple writing tasks to help them gradually develop the habit of accumulating vocabulary and sentence structures, thereby improving their writing skills. Personalized tasks should also consider students' interests and their knowledge background, integrating writing with students' real-life situations and cultural backgrounds, so that students can experience their unique feelings and experiences during the writing process and generate the desire and motivation to write.

4.2. Diversified teaching methods

Diverse teaching methods can effectively address various situations that students encounter during their learning process. Teachers can stimulate students' learning initiative by using task-based teaching, cooperative learning, and flipped classrooms, etc. Task-based teaching relies on specific writing tasks to enable students to conduct practical operations, thereby enhancing their writing skills. Cooperative learning involves improving students' writing skills through group cooperation and peer evaluation. The flipped classroom allows students to preview basic knowledge before class and deepen their understanding through discussions and writing in class. By adopting such methods, students will find the most suitable learning approach in various learning environments and thereby improve their writing proficiency.

4.3. Emotional support and motivation

Emotional support and motivation play a significant role in helping students improve their writing skills. Teachers should create a positive and supportive learning environment to reduce the series of pressures that students experience in writing, thereby enhancing their self-confidence. Teachers provide students with positive feedback through ambiguous language and positive remarks, making students feel their progress and achievements ^[3]. Additionally, for students with weak motivation or negative emotions, teachers can adopt more personalized incentive measures, set some small goals for students, provide timely feedback, and use rewards to increase students' enthusiasm. Utilizing emotional support and motivation can effectively motivate students and thereby improve their writing skills.

5. Conclusion

Individual differences in second language acquisition have a significant and complex impact on English writing teaching, involving various aspects such as cognition, emotion, and motivation. Due to the differences in students' writing performance, teachers should adopt flexible teaching methods to meet the needs of different learners. By using personalized task design, emotional encouragement, and various teaching methods, teachers can motivate each student to improve their writing skills, overcome their difficulties, and exert their potential. With the development of educational technology and the popularization of personalized learning platforms, teachers' understanding of individual differences for each student will be more accurate, and they can provide more personalized teaching plans. The use of technologies such as artificial intelligence will make writing teaching more flexible and efficient, facilitating the improvement of students' writing skills. At the same time, teachers should explore and practice new teaching models to adapt to increasingly complex and diverse learning needs, thereby improving the quality of second language writing teaching.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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