

A Study on the Application of Stratified Teaching Method in English Teaching in Chinese Higher Vocational Colleges

Yao Hong, Zhang Xuefeng

[**Abstract**] In recent years, with the implementation of enrollment expansion policies in colleges, students from regions with varying teaching quality have been studying the same content under a unified teaching framework, resulting in significant differences in their English proficiency and learning abilities. These differences not only suppress students' interest in learning English, but also hinder their ability to engage in efficient independent learning. In response to this phenomenon, this article introduces the definition and theoretical basis of the stratified teaching method and systematically elaborates on the significance of implementing stratified teaching. On this basis, the article further proposes issues that should be paid attention to during the implementation of the stratified teaching method and the current challenges faced by it, aiming to provide a useful reference for solving problems in English teaching in vocational colleges.

[**Key words**] stratified teaching method; Chinese higher vocational colleges; English teaching

[**About the author**] Yao Hong (1999—), female, from Anqing, Anhui, China, master of education. Research interests: applied linguistics, English teaching methodology. Zhang Xuefeng (1997—), female, from Anqing, Anhui, China, master of education. Research interests: applied linguistics, English teaching methodology.

[**DOI**] <https://doi.org/10.62662/kxwxy0105007>

[**Website**] www.oacj.net

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the deepening implementation of enrollment expansion policies in higher education institutions, the student population in vocational colleges has become increasingly diverse. These students come from various regions and schools with differing teaching quality, resulting in significant disparities in their English proficiency and learning capabilities. Under a unified teaching framework, they are required to study the same content, which undoubtedly poses a challenge to teaching.

On the one hand, due to variations in their English foundations, some students struggle to keep up with the teacher's pace in class and are unable to effectively absorb new knowledge. Conversely, other students may find the teaching content overly simple and lacking challenge, leading to a loss of interest and motivation in learning. This disparity not only affects students' academic performance but also hinders their personal development, making it difficult for many students to adapt. On the other hand, there are also differences in learning habits and strategies among students. Some excel at independent learning and can utilize their free time for deeper studies, while others rely more on the guidance and assistance of teachers.

However, within a unified teaching model, it is challenging for teachers to cater to the needs of each individual student, resulting in some students not receiving effective guidance and support, which further impacts their learning outcomes. Therefore, vocational colleges need to adopt more flexible and personalized teaching strategies to address these differences. Stratified teaching method is an effective approach. By scientifically

stratifying students and developing tailored teaching objectives and content for different levels, students' learning needs can be better met and their interest and enthusiasm for learning can be stimulated. Simultaneously, teachers can adopt diverse teaching methods and techniques based on the characteristics of students in different strata, enhancing teaching effectiveness and helping students better master English knowledge and skills.

2 Definition of stratified teaching method

Stratified teaching method is a comprehensive and student-centered approach to education that takes into account the diverse knowledge, ability, and learning needs of individual students. In this method, teachers meticulously categorize students based on a range of factors, including their learning foundation, interests, receptive ability, and current mastery level. By doing so, the teaching content and methods can be tailored to meet the specific needs of each stratum, ensuring that every student receives an education that is suitable for their capabilities and interests.

The core principle of stratified teaching is to provide an environment where students can learn happily, actively, and harmoniously. By adapting the teaching approach to the unique characteristics of each stratum, teachers are able to foster a positive learning atmosphere where students are engaged and motivated. This not only enhances the overall learning experience but also encourages students to develop a love for learning and a desire to excel.

Moreover, stratified teaching method allows teachers to optimize various aspects of the teaching process. From lesson preparation to classroom instruction, and from homework assignment to student guidance, every aspect is carefully designed to cater to the needs of the specific stratum. This ensures that the teaching is more targeted and effective, truly reflecting the educational philosophy of teaching students in accordance with their aptitudes.

In addition, stratified teaching holds significant value in promoting the individual development of students and enhancing the overall quality of teaching. By providing tailored education to students, challenges faced by students with different backgrounds and abilities can be addressed. This, in turn, contributes to the development of a more inclusive and equitable education system where all students have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Therefore, stratified teaching method is not just a teaching technique but a comprehensive approach to education that holds the potential to transform the learning experience of students and enhance the quality of education in our schools.

3 Theoretical basis of applying stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching

Firstly, the stratified teaching method is deeply rooted in the theory of individual differences. Given that every student possesses a unique identity, characterized by diverse learning abilities, passions, and cognitive styles, it becomes imperative to cater to their specific needs. Stratified teaching accomplishes this by dividing students into distinct groups, ensuring that the content and pace of instruction are tailored to the unique characteristics of each stratum. This approach not only fulfills the learning requirements of students but also fosters their personalized growth and development.

Secondly, the stratified teaching method is consonant with the Zone of Proximal Development theory proposed by Vygotsky. According to this theory, students have two distinct levels of development: their current level of performance, which represents what they can achieve independently, and their potential level of development, which reflects their capabilities that can be unlocked through effective teaching. The gap between these two levels constitutes the Zone of Proximal Development. Stratified teaching aims to bridge this gap by establishing targeted teaching goals and content for each stratum of students. This approach challenges students to gradually surpass their

current limitations and achieve higher levels of cognitive and academic growth.

Moreover, the stratified teaching method embodies the educational philosophy of teaching students in accordance with their aptitudes. This philosophy underscores the importance of recognizing and responding to the diverse needs and abilities of students. Stratified teaching takes this approach to heart, categorizing students based on their academic proficiency, interests, and learning rates. By doing so, teachers can devise tailored teaching strategies and methods that are aligned with the unique characteristics of each stratum. This ensures that each student receives instruction that is both challenging and engaging, thus maximizing their potential for growth and development.

Lastly, the stratified teaching method aligns closely with the cognitive psychology's perspectives on the learning process. Cognitive psychology maintains that learning is a multifaceted and intricate process that involves the reception, processing, storage, and retrieval of information. Stratified teaching takes into account these cognitive processes by adjusting the difficulty and depth of teaching content accordingly. It also employs a diverse range of teaching methods and tools to captivate students' interest and motivate them to engage actively in the learning process. By doing so, stratified teaching not only enhances students' cognitive development but also facilitates deep learning and long-term retention of knowledge.

4 Significance of applying stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching

4.1 Stratified teaching method can better stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning English

By carefully dividing students into distinct levels based on their English proficiency and learning aptitudes, we ensure that each student is placed in an optimal learning environment that closely aligns with their current abilities. In such a tailored setting, students are liberated from the monotony of overly simplistic content that might bore them, and they are shielded from the discouragement that might arise from attempting to tackle material that is too challenging.

Instead, within this stratified framework, students are empowered to explore their own learning rhythms, discovering methods and strategies that resonate with their unique ways of processing information. This allows them to unearth the joy and satisfaction inherent in the process of acquiring new language skills, making the journey of English learning a rewarding and enriching experience.

Furthermore, this stratified approach fosters a positive learning dynamic that keeps students engaged and motivated. They are more likely to persevere in the face of challenges and embrace opportunities for growth, as they can see their progress in tangible ways. This sustained momentum propels them to continually elevate their English proficiency and expand their overall capabilities. Moreover, the layered setup benefits teachers immensely. It provides them with a clearer understanding of each student's learning trajectory, enabling them to offer more focused and effective guidance. Teachers can tailor their teaching strategies to meet the specific needs of each level, ensuring that all students receive the support they require to make meaningful progress.

4.2 Stratified teaching method is conducive to improving students' learning efficiency

By implementing the stratified teaching approach, teachers are able to further refine their teaching strategies and more accurately grasp the learning characteristics and needs of each individual student. This method not only focuses on the overall learning level of students but also emphasizes their individual differences, ensuring that every student receives the most suitable teaching guidance tailored to their needs.

Within the stratified teaching framework, teachers develop specialized teaching plans and methodologies for

students at different levels. For those with weaker foundations, teachers design more basic content to help consolidate their knowledge and gradually build their confidence. For students with intermediate levels, teachers focus on expanding and deepening knowledge, guiding them to explore additional learning areas. And for top-performing students, teachers provide more challenging tasks to stimulate their potential and promote their development to higher levels.

This teaching model ensures that the difficulty and depth of the content are aligned with the actual abilities of students, providing each individual with precisely the right level of guidance. In such an environment, students are neither bored or disinterested due to overly simple content nor discouraged and frustrated by excessive difficulty. Instead, they are able to engage with the material at a pace that suits them, investing higher levels of enthusiasm and motivation into their learning, and efficiently absorbing knowledge and mastering skills.

4.3 Stratified teaching method can promote communication and collaboration among students

Under the stratified teaching model, students from different levels have the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning, where they can exchange ideas and share insights, thus achieving knowledge sharing and complementarity. This cross-level collaborative learning provides students with a vast learning platform, enabling them to continually broaden their horizons and cognitive abilities through interaction with their peers.

Through collaborative learning, students can encourage and learn from each other. As they work together to complete learning tasks, they not only exercise their teamwork skills but also enhance their communication abilities. During these exchanges, students can share learning methods and strategies, learn from each other, and continuously improve their learning capabilities and overall qualities.

Moreover, this collaborative learning approach helps students deepen their understanding and application of English knowledge through interaction. By communicating with classmates from different levels, students can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the various aspects and dimensions of English knowledge, leading to a deeper comprehension and mastery of the subject. Additionally, as they collaborate to complete tasks, students are required to apply the knowledge they have learned in real-life situations, further enhancing their ability to understand and apply knowledge.

5 Issues to consider when applying stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching

First of all, respecting individual differences among students is an important prerequisite for implementing the stratified teaching method. In order to ensure the scientific and reasonable leveling standards, teachers cannot simply divide students into levels based on their English scores. Instead, they should comprehensively consider various factors such as students' learning abilities, interests, and potential, so as to truly ensure that each student can find a learning environment that suits them and achieve maximum development.

Secondly, when implementing the stratified teaching method, teachers need to change their traditional educational concepts and enhance their understanding of the idea of stratified teaching. They should abandon the concept of simply measuring students' excellence based on their grades, and instead focus on their all-round development, respecting and accommodating individual differences among each student. At the same time, teachers should adhere to the people-oriented educational philosophy, patiently and carefully do ideological work for each student, guide them to view layering correctly, and stimulate their learning initiative and enthusiasm.

In addition, when implementing the stratified teaching method, teachers should also pay special attention to students' psychological conditions and strengthen their psychological counseling and guidance. Layering may make some students doubt their own positioning or feelings of inferiority. Therefore, teachers need to constantly monitor

students' psychological changes, provide timely encouragement and assistance, and ensure that they can correctly view layering, build self-confidence, and actively participate in learning activities.

At the same time, teachers should ensure that the difficulty and depth of the teaching content match the actual level of students when developing teaching plans and methods. For students at different levels, teachers should design personalized teaching activities and tasks to meet their different needs. In addition, teachers should adjust teaching strategies according to the actual situation in a timely manner to ensure the flexibility and adaptability of the teaching process, so as to better promote students' learning and development.

Finally, when implementing the stratified teaching method, teachers should focus on cultivating students' teamwork spirit and communication skills. By organizing cross-level cooperative learning activities, students are encouraged to learn from each other and help each other. It can not only improve students' comprehensive quality and social adaptability, but also promote communication and interaction between students at different levels, further enhancing the cohesion and centripetal force of the class.

6 Current challenges of applying stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching

6.1 Substantial divergences in students' basic proficiency

Students in vocational colleges have a diverse range of backgrounds, including different regions, educational histories, and even cultural environments. This diversity results in significant disparities in their English proficiency, which are reflected not only in their vocabulary size and grasp of grammar, but also in their English application skills, speaking abilities, and listening comprehension. Therefore, the implementation of stratified teaching method in vocational colleges poses a particularly prominent challenge.

The core of the stratified teaching method lies in teaching students according to their individual aptitudes and needs, providing them with more targeted and effective instruction. However, achieving this requires teachers to invest considerable time and effort in gaining a deep understanding of each student's specific situation. This encompasses their learning habits, interests, English proficiency, and more. Only by thoroughly grasping this information can teachers more accurately categorize students into different levels and devise teaching plans and methodologies that are more aligned with their needs.

However, in practical application, teachers in vocational colleges often face dual constraints of resources and time. With a large student population, it is difficult for teachers to have sufficient time to individually assess each student's specific circumstances. Additionally, the limited availability of teachers makes it challenging to provide personalized guidance and assistance to every student. These factors complicate the implementation of stratified teaching, often making it difficult to achieve the desired outcomes.

6.2 Challenges in allocating teaching resources

The implementation of stratified teaching method necessitates teachers to provide customized teaching content and approaches to students with varying levels and needs. This teaching strategy inevitably involves the rational allocation and distribution of teaching resources. In vocational colleges, teaching resources, such as teaching equipment, textbooks, and teacher resources, are limited. Therefore, the key challenge lies in ensuring both teaching quality and the fair and effective distribution of resources under these constraints.

To carry out stratified teaching, teachers need to scientifically categorize students into different levels and develop corresponding teaching plans and strategies for each level. This not only requires teachers to possess high professional literacy and teaching capabilities, but also demands significant time and effort to assess students' conditions and design teaching content. Simultaneously, schools need to make reasonable plans and adjustments to

teaching resources to meet the demands of stratified teaching.

However, due to the limited teaching resources in vocational colleges, it is a highly challenging task to guarantee both teaching quality and the fair allocation of resources under limited conditions. To this end, schools need to establish a scientific and reasonable resource allocation mechanism to distribute teaching resources based on the actual needs and teaching objectives of students at each level. Additionally, it is necessary to strengthen the supervision and evaluation of the utilization of teaching resources to ensure their effective use and avoid their waste.

6.3 Variations in teachers' capabilities and beliefs

Although the stratified teaching method has been widely accepted by teachers in theory as a teaching strategy that can better meet the individual needs of students, significant differences emerge in its practical implementation due to the diverse educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, and teaching philosophies of individual teachers. Some teachers may lack the necessary skills to effectively carry out stratified teaching due to a lack of relevant training or practical experience. These teachers may find it challenging to categorize students, design differentiated teaching content and methods, and fully leverage the advantages of stratified teaching.

Moreover, while some teachers have a positive attitude towards the stratified teaching method, their insufficient understanding of its core principles and specific operational methods may lead to deviations in actual teaching. They may overly focus on the formal aspects of stratification while neglecting the actual needs and individual differences of students, or they may not be precise enough in selecting the difficulty level of teaching content and teaching methods, resulting in unsatisfactory outcomes for stratified teaching.

6.4 Difficulties in determining stratification criteria

Determining the standards for stratification in a scientific and reasonable manner is undoubtedly a core issue when implementing the stratified teaching method. The establishment of stratification standards not only concerns the quality of teaching effects but also directly impacts students' learning experience and growth development. Currently, despite some initial attempts made by vocational colleges to adopt stratified teaching and various methods to stratify students, such as their exam scores, learning abilities, and interests. These approaches inevitably carry a certain degree of subjectivity and uncertainty.

Firstly, relying solely on exam scores for stratification often only reflects a student's performance in a specific stage or subject, which is unable to comprehensively assess their overall abilities and potential. Furthermore, exam scores can be influenced by external factors like the difficulty of the test and the examination environment, leading to biases. Secondly, using learning abilities as a stratification standard also has certain limitations. The assessment of learning abilities is typically based on teachers' observations and students' self-reports, which often lack objectivity and accuracy. Additionally, learning ability is a dynamically changing process, and determining a student's level based on a single assessment is evidently not scientific enough. Lastly, while considering students' interests is a positive attempt, interests are diverse and changeable, making them difficult to serve as a stable and reliable basis for stratification. At the same time, interests do not always align with students' learning abilities and actual needs, and overemphasizing interests may lead to a mismatch of teaching resources and a decline in teaching effectiveness.

6.5 Issues with student's psychological adaptation

The stratified teaching method, as an individualized teaching strategy, while theoretically offers numerous advantages, may also bring about a certain degree of psychological pressure for some students. This pressure mainly stems from students' perception and feelings of being categorized into different levels.

For students assigned to lower levels, they may feel inferior and defeated due to their academic performance

falling short of their peers. They may worry that their abilities and intelligence are underestimated, leading to doubts about their self – worth. This psychological state not only affects their learning enthusiasm and self – confidence but may also have a negative impact on their mental health.

On the other hand, for students assigned to higher levels, despite their excellent academic performance, they may also experience greater psychological pressure. They may fear that they cannot meet the high expectations of teachers and parents or lose their advantage in competition with other classmates. This pressure can lead to excessive anxiety, affecting their learning outcomes and physical and mental well-being.

7 Conclusion

In higher vocational English teaching, adopting the stratified teaching method can not only effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm for English learning, but also assist students at all levels in achieving personalized learning goals. However, there are also certain challenges in implementing the stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching. Therefore, when applying the stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching, teachers need to focus on the individual differences of students and scientifically and reasonably categorize them into different levels. At the same time, teachers should shift from traditional concepts, pay attention to the comprehensive development of students, emphasize student – orientation, and stimulate their enthusiasm for learning. During the implementation process, teachers should also pay attention to the psychological changes of students and ensure that they have a correct understanding of stratification. Additionally, teachers need to develop teaching plans and methods that are tailored to the actual situation of students at each level, and focus on cultivating their team spirit and communication skills. Through comprehensive measures, we can ensure the effective implementation of the stratified teaching method in higher vocational English teaching and promote the comprehensive development of students.

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