

# Research on the Application of Humanistic psychology in College English Writing Teaching

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**Abstract.** This paper expounds some ways to teach college English writing from the perspective of the theory of humanistic psychology. Hierarchy of needs theory is put forward by American humanistic psychologist Maslow. It is an important theory in the development of humanistic psychology. Applying this theory to college English writing teaching can stimulate students' interest in English writing and improve their overall writing level.

**Keywords:** humanistic psychology, college English writing teaching, hierarchy of needs theory

## 1 Introduction

Since ancient times, human beings have never stopped the discussion of self-development and self-improvement. One of human nature is innovation, German anthropologist Landman once said, if there is something immutable about man, then this thing is the creative nature of people. [1] The process of writing is the process of self-realization that is to promote people to keep developing aspiration and improving themselves. More importantly, one of purposes of teaching writing is to train people' thinking. Sharing one's knowledge, thoughts, and feelings with more people is about the way to change the world through words that let them know what you know, think about what you are thinking about, feel what you are feeling, and then have a positive impact on their lives. As a writer, you must recognize that your social role is to be the chronicler and the communicator. How to teach students to learn English writing theory, English vocabulary, syntax, article structure and other knowledge to flexibly apply to writing will be a valuable study. Teachers must look for new instructional theories and methods, so humanistic psychology theory contributes to improving college English writing teaching. Humanistic psychology is put forward by American humanistic psychologist Maslow and Rogers, etc. Applying this theory to college English writing teaching can stimulate students' interest in English writing, enhance students' English writing ability and improve their overall writing level.

## 2 Theoretical Basis

Maslow believed that motivation is the internal power of individual growth and development. Motivation is made up of five different kinds of needs: physical needs, security needs, love and belonging needs, respect needs and self-actualization needs. Physiological needs are the most primitive in human needs and it is a strong force to drive people's action. When the physiological need is satisfied, it is necessary to ensure the realization of security needs. For example, people are born with a need for security and a desire for freedom. Generally speaking, everyone is eager for the care and understanding from family, friends and colleagues. In other words, people need friendship, love, trust and warmth. Respect means that people need to be respected, including self-respect, self-evaluation and respect for others. Self-actualization needs mean to complete the task that one's ability can achieve, to give full play to one's potential, to do one's best and to be perfect[2]. These five requirements are implemented level by level, from the low level to the high level. Maslow believed that human needs are conscious, purposeful and creative. This is different from animals. Maslow's theory has some practical significance.

Carl Rogers put forwards the view that education needs to foster students' intrinsic or natural sense of wonder, creativity, capacity for self-understanding, and growth toward their self-actualization. Self-actualization is the end towards which all humans strive. We each have a basic tendency to move

towards becoming complete, healthy and competent individuals through the process characterized by self-government, self-regulation and autonomy.

They advocate a philosophy of teaching in which students are given a far more important role in the classroom, and they argue, as well, that teachers should be learning facilitators rather than didactic instructors and that in order to be successful learning facilitators, they should be sensitive, and caring, genuine and empathetic[3]. According to their theories, college English writing teaching should be student-centered teaching.

### **3 The Application of Humanistic Psychology in College English Writing Teaching**

Guided writing is based on the current textbooks for non-English majors at the college level. Teachers serve to provide students with guides in the act of writing. The various guided writing techniques have two functions in college English writing class. Firstly, guided writing limits the decision students have to make in the act of writing and relieves their worries and enables them to have a sense of achievement. Secondly, guided writing can enhance students' the perceptions, writing strategies and understanding of language and help them make use of information to express what they think.

#### **3.1 The Application of Physiological Needs in the Act of Pre-writing**

In college English writing teaching, pre-writing is an input stage and it serves the function of focusing, stimulating and guiding the thinking activities. Students can choose some topics they are interested in to discuss in English so as to have a sense of achievement in English writing learning and consolidate their word learning foundation. Before writing, teachers can provide some reading materials related to the topic to enlarge their vocabulary and to stimulate their interest of English writing. After that, the class can be divided up into several groups and group brainstorming may take place by discussing the pros and cons of the topic. Teachers are similar to the "advance organizers" in educational psychology theory, which can make English writing have a positive transfer effect. The essence of this activity is to encourage every student to think deeply about what he or she attempts to write and to facilitate the transition from spoken English to written English. According to the theory of positive transfer, the mastery of reading skills contributes to the formation of writing ability. Therefore, in writing teaching, a large number of reading materials should be provided to students to meet their more "Physiological Needs" in learning so that they can acquire information and generate ideas through reading, and then present them in the form of words after thinking. To develop students' critical thinking ability through writing, teachers should focus on the whole process of writing which includes reading, thinking, practice, express what they think with words.

#### **3.2 The Application of Security Needs in the Act of Writing**

The sense of security for learners is projected into learning as they enjoy satisfaction of acquiring knowledge. In English Writing teaching, when students really master a certain number of words and writing skills, they will feel happy and satisfied. That is, they will be more active and patient to engage in English learning because of learning motivation based on the sense of security. However, this sense of security is temporary, because there will be new learning problems to solve and new learning tasks to complete. The new task is to write correct sentences, paragraph development and the whole essay. In writing teaching, teachers should provide and analyze more excellent samples that can reflect social reality. During the whole presentation, teachers should write the key sentences and views on the blackboard, which is useful for the students to discuss and express their views. In this process, students should be encouraged to come on the stage and write their ideas on the blackboard. In this way, it is convenient to correct the students' words and grammar mistakes in time, and it can also leave a deep impression on the other students. When students can express their ideas in English exactly, they will get great satisfaction and have the sense of security in English writing.

### 3.3 The Application of Love and Belonging Needs in the Act of Rewriting

Being able to express oneself exactly and be recognized by the other people is very important for a person, because it brings a sense of belonging to oneself. In English writing teaching, rewriting is not a sign that one is incapable, but rather it is an integral part of the whole process. So love and belonging needs in the act of rewriting are required and important. Students can get the sense of belonging by discussing rewriting in groups. In the challenging participation and practice, students experience the significance of cooperation and understand that their self-worth must be realized through cooperation and communication with others [4]. When their scripts are returned, students can be paired up and asked to discuss and correct each mistake indicated in the teacher's marking. If they are unable to correct any item, or are not sure, their teacher can be consulted. In the process of group discussion, different viewpoints will be generated, which will help them to obtain more knowledge and stimulate their critical thinking and writing interest. At the same time, the sharing of rewriting process lightens the burden for students, helps the weaker ones and makes the writing work more enjoyable, which can also enable students to learn more ways of language expression, improve students' oral expression ability. In short, group discussion of rewriting process can greatly stimulate students' interest in learning and enable them to actively participate in the activities of writing.

### 3.4 The Application of Esteem and Self-actualization Needs in the Act of Free Writing

Maslow points out that the ability to create and self-actualization are the decisive factor of human behavior.[5] This is the highest level. Self-actualization needs refer to the realization of individual ideal, ambition, an individual's ability to the greatest extent, to achieve one's self-actualization, accept myself to accept others, problem solving ability, consciousness enhancement, good at independent thinking, alone asked not to be disturbed, complete with their own ability to match the need of everything. That is to say, people must do their jobs well, so that they can feel the greatest happiness. Maslow suggests that the approach taken to meet self-actualization needs varies from person to person. Free writing is unrestricted and unimpeded imagination, which asks students just to write what they think and not to care too much about the others' approval. Free writing makes articles infinitely creative and write the whispers of one's authentic self. Free writing will allow students to rediscover themselves and the world, which will also give them the energy of self-actualization needs. They only need to take a deep breath, relax their body and give themselves enough space, so they can begin with a few words and write freely. The essay may be a good essay in its own right, or it may require two or three drafts of revision by applying writing skills before they've written it and then decide where to put it.

In English writing teaching, as long as students take the writing seriously, teachers should give timely and full encouragement. If most students seldom get positive comments and recognition from teachers and classmates in class, they will have less and less self-confidence to express what they think and less and less enthusiasm to participate in class activities. As a result, writing teaching effect will be affected to some extent. Therefore, teachers' encouragement and positive evaluation should be reflected in group discussions and the tasks of writing. In group discussion, teachers should listen more, observe more, analyze carefully and interrupt less. At the end of each class, teachers should assign a "free writing", according to the content of the class discussion, and ask students to use the language knowledge to write an article. The teacher must give students feedback and encouragement, which will meet the student's esteem needs and help them to improve their writing level. One of purposes of English writing teaching is not only improving students' writing ability, but also improving students' comprehensive abilities in using English. This is the higher level of English writing teaching.

## 4 Conclusion

In college English writing teaching, according to Maslow's theory, meeting the needs of students' writing process contributes to improving writing teaching effect. In view of this fact, teachers should study deeply college English writing teaching from the perspective of the theories of humanistic psychology, the existent problems and the innovative approaches in English writing teaching. During the whole process of College English writing teaching, teachers are more considerate of their students' affective needs, which lets the

students actively participate in the activities of writing teaching, broadens the students' horizons, enriches their experiences, thus improves students' writing ability in the interaction of teaching and learning.

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