

# The Cultivation of Learners' Literary Competence to Improve Their Emotional Literacy in College English Teaching and Learning

-----An Example of the "New Horizon College English (Third Edition)"

Hui Liu

Ningxia Normal University, Guyuan, Ningxia, 756000

**Keywords:** emotional literacy, literary competence, college English teaching and learning,

**Abstract:** At present, learners' emotional literacy has been discussed a lot with the increasing attention being paid to the learner-centered college English teaching and learning. This paper focuses on what emotional literacy is and how learner's emotional literacy improves through cultivation of literary competence. Language learning can offer better affective means for university students and help them recognize their feelings as they occur, handle feelings appropriately, motivate their feelings and direct themselves toward a goal, recognize feelings of others and handle interpersonal interaction and negotiations. In turn, these affective literary will improve their language ability.

## 1. Introduction

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a great shift from teacher-centered learning to learner-centered learning has been taken off. One of the results of this shift is that more attention is paid to the learners' emotional literacy, an important factor contributing to the success of failure in language learning. At present, in College English teaching and learning, quite a few teachers still focused on the transmission of language knowledge as the main teaching means, ignoring the cultivation of students' emotional literacy. With the reform of College English teaching, the emotional literacy in language teaching has been paid more and more attention. In the process of teaching, teachers explore literary knowledge in the textbook. With the cultivation of students' literary in the text, teachers can greatly enhance the students' English language ability, to stimulate their interest in learning English, to promote their aesthetic taste. Therefore, students' literary competence has a very positive significance in the development of the emotion in College English teaching and learning. The teachers make full use of English textbooks for students' emotional development and the role of language, let the students go to realize English text in philosophy, promote the communication between Chinese and Western culture. Based on a large number of teaching experiences, from the perspective of English teaching, this paper explores and analyzes the related emotional education functions of English texts in the New Horizon College English (Third Edition) reading and writing course.

## 2. Emotional Literacy and Literary Competence

The term *emotional literacy* has often been used in parallel to, and sometimes interchangeably with, the term *emotional intelligence*. However, there are important differences between the two. Emotional literacy was noted as part of a project advocating humanistic education in the early 1970s. The term was first used by Claude Steiner (1997) who says:

*Emotional literacy is made up of 'the ability to understand your emotions, the ability to listen to others and empathize with their emotions, and the ability to express emotions productively. To be emotionally literate is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and improves the quality of life around you. Emotional literacy improves relationships, creates loving possibilities between people, makes cooperative work possible, and facilitates the feeling of community.*

In a 1994 report on the current state of emotional literacy in the US, writer Daniel Goleman stated: "...in navigating our lives, it is our fears and envies, our rages and depressions, our worries and anxieties that steer us day to day. Even the most academically brilliant among us are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions. The price we pay for emotional literacy is in failed marriages and troubled families, in stunted social and work lives, in deteriorating physical health and mental anguish and, as a society, in tragedies such as killings..."

Exactly what is Emotional? The term encompasses the following five characteristics and abilities:

- Self-awareness-knowing your emotions, recognizing feelings as they occur, and discriminating between them

- Mood-management-handling feelings so they're relevant to the current situation and you react appropriately

- Self-motivation- "gathering up" your feelings and directing yourself toward a goal, despite self-doubt, inertia and impulsiveness

- Empathy-recognizing feelings in others and tuning into their verbal and nonverbal cues

- Managing relationships--handling interpersonal interaction, conflict resolution, and negotiations.

A broad understanding of emotional literacy in language learning is important for at least two reasons. First, attention to emotional aspects can lead to more effective language learning. According to a report from the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, the most critical element for a student's success in school is an understanding of how to learn. The key ingredients for this understanding are: confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and ability to cooperate.

These traits are all aspects of Emotional Literacy. Basically, a student who learns to learn is much more apt to succeed. When dealing with the affective side of language learners, attention needs to be given both to how we can overcome problems created by negative emotions and to how we can create and use more positive, facilitative emotions. A second reason for focusing attention on emotion in the language classroom reaches beyond language teaching and beyond what has traditionally been considered the academic realm. Daniel Goleman (1995) has convincingly presented his case for an 'expanded mandate' for all educational institutions. He points out that, especially since the eighteenth century, in Western civilization we have concentrated on understanding the rational, cognitive functions of our mind, while misusing or denying whatever falls within the realm of the emotions or the non-rational. One of the consequences of this situation is our current 'emotional illiteracy', Goleman states, 'when the fabric of society seems to unravel at ever-greater speed, when selfishness, violence, and a meanness of spirit seem to be rotting the goodness of our communal lives... There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capabilities'. He puts forth as a solution 'a new vision of what schools can do to educate the whole student, bringing together mind and heart in the classroom' and shows how many educational programs are already dealing very successfully with the emotional mind.

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in China, a great shift from teacher-centered learning to learner-centered learning has been taken off. One of the results of this shift is that more attention is paid to the learner's personality and individual difference, an important factor contributing to the success or failure in language learning. Emotional literacy is one aspect of this. It is necessary for students to improve their emotional literacy.

It is claimed that studying literature enables EFL students to promote emotional literacy. It is quite common for literature to be taught as a College English classroom: The teacher presents teaching materials including a cultural and social introduction of the country, a summary of the literary movements and theories, a historical background of the literary work, and other related information. In addition to that, multiple views on the literary values of the article from the textbook and the writer himself put forward by various literary authorities and critics are also diagrammed in front of the students.

Burmfit and Carter (1986) have offered a comprehensive definition with regard to the literary

competence: it is “a combination of linguistic, socio-cultural, historical and semiotic awareness” (p. 18).

The relationship between emotional literacy and literacy competence in language learning, then, is a bidirectional one. This paper focuses on how cultivate students' literacy competence to improve their emotional literacy in language teaching and learning, and some advice for teachers is also mentioned in this paper.

### **3. The Relationship between Teaching Materials, Students' Emotional Literacy and Literary Competence**

On the whole, promoting human development is the core of the whole education. The development of emotional literacy is a part of personal development. English teaching has the responsibility and obligation to combine the characteristics of the development of the subject and integrate the students' emotional attitude and values into the daily teaching process. Language is mainly used in interpersonal communication. The process of learning language is to a great extent the process of learning interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication inevitably involves a person's emotional attitude and the emotional attitude of a person needs to be expressed in language to a great extent. Proper and reasonable use of language helps to communicate emotions and improve interpersonal relationships... Therefore, emphasizing the cultivation of emotional attitude in English class is an effective way to combine subject education with comprehensive humanistic accomplishment cultivation. It is also the ability of students to improve their independent thinking and judgment in language learning, to develop their ability to communicate and cooperate with others, to establish a correct outlook on life, world outlook and values, and to enhance their sense of social responsibility.

"New Horizon College English (Third Edition) Reading and Writing Course" teaching material relates to and widely, not only to learn, gender equality, environmental protection, environmental protection, generation gap, war in the University, and students interested in the topic, such as friendship, heroism, love and human rights etc. These articles involve a large number of background knowledge of literary works. By studying and interpreting some famous foreign literary works, we can promote students' understanding of humanistic knowledge in English speaking countries, and students can also improve their writing ability by reading different genres. Different genres represent not only the different characters of the author, but also the unique charm of the language from different aspects. In the teaching process, to guide students to learn English prose, can let the student through this unique form of prose, to understand the author of praise good things; lead students to learn novel, can think deeply the formation of this story reflects. In higher education curriculum, mining emotional education in teaching materials can not only consolidate students' learning English knowledge, but also give students certain humanistic quality education. "Secrets to beauty", for example, in volume fourth, points out that "beauty is a process of growth, a self-transformation that is achieved through consciousness and learning." Beauty lies in the meaning of life, in truth. It is an emotional and spiritual journey that requires people to have faith to gain, and the motivation of this belief comes from generosity and love of kindness. For modern people, especially for college students with the movie star looks perfect appearance and shape as the aesthetic standard, perfect appearance and the excessive pursuit of cosmetic surgery, eat nutrition, diet this means the pursuit of the beautiful appearance and ignore the inner cultivation practice. The article points out that "beautiful people are not necessarily happy". "True beauty has nothing to do with appearance, but choice. In the journey of life, whenever we go through a node, we should look for those life experiences that can show and purify our inner beauty and accumulate them. These are the true saying many in College English curriculum development, the text of the emotional literacy, students can fully sense, language and related visual function can combine all aspects and angles of training students' language skills, but also from the English language to many thoughts and feelings, is a reflection of the background and there are many Thoughts on human society and on ethics. By learning these aspects, students can also understand the background of the times well, and be influenced by good emotions, which can greatly enrich students' emotional experience.

#### 4. The Cultivation of Learners' Literary Competence to Improve Their Emotional Literacy

College students are in a period of active thinking and strong acceptance and also a critical period for the formation of their outlook on life and values. In this period, the influence of the outside world on college students is very significant and English teaching among universities is only teaching focusing on English skills and education of literary and emotional elements is very limited from the traditional teaching system in our country. After entering the University, college students have entered a relatively active and relatively diverse environment. Some students are more likely to feel slack and anxious in English learning. Therefore, college students' emotional teaching in English literature class can not only stimulate students to better learn English, but also improve their personality.

Humanistic knowledge is the accumulation of social historical background and humanistic environment, which is an important asset of human civilization. Excellent humanities works can bring students into specific environment arouse students' emotional resonance and exert certain impact on their spirit. For example, the fourth volume of the eighth lesson "A meaningful life" using the ancient Greek philosopher "people are a measure of all things" the famous opposition to some people in the process of environmental protection regardless of all the extreme human thought of environmental dedication. In the third lesson of the first lesson, "Never, ever give up!" the author takes British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as an example. His courage and determination of refusing to surrender not only inspired the whole nation, but also encouraged the whole world during the bitter and dark era of World War II. The textbook also mentions two of the most learned scientists - Albert Einstein and Thomas Edison - for example, who were both faced with enormous obstacles and extreme criticisms, abandoned by their teachers as idiots. However, the parents of the two boys believe in them [8]. They are unremittingly working with their sons every day and the children know that if they want to succeed, they must never be afraid of long and hard work. In the end, both Einstein and Edison plagued their childhood and then made the great discoveries of the world today. Students can be infected by their protagonists, establish their positive and healthy outlook on life and at the same time consolidate English knowledge with a multiplier effect when reading these humanistic works. In the teaching process, the author attaches great importance to the research of emotional education in college English teaching. In the teaching practice in recent years, we have distributed 200 questionnaires of "Emotional Education Evaluation of College English Literature Lessons" to students of statistics, and collected 196 copies. Through statistics and analysis of the content of the questionnaire, the author finds that the sophomore majoring in statistics has had a preliminary understanding and plan for College English learning, and some students with strong learning ability have their own unique learning methods. Moreover, the survey also found that the demand for English in the accounting profession is getting higher and higher. Therefore, students are more and more vigorous in learning English and show strong desire for knowledge. So we can enhance students' emotional education in English from the following points.

First of all, English teaching has a very positive side, that is, students generally reflect the demand for English learning more and more, almost 70% of students insist on learning English more than 40 minutes every day through the past teaching experience and the recent reflection of students. Nearly 80% of the students think Anglo-American humanistic education is very meaningful and they really like or are very willing to devote themselves to the appreciation of English language and literature. They hope that they can learn something meaningful to their life from Anglo-American work and further consolidate their English foundation to lay the foundation for their future development. However, the results of the survey also indicate that the current teaching of College English literature is also faced with the problem of weak student foundation and less elective courses. If there is a British and American literature elective course for non-English majors, 40% of the students will register this course. Teaching and learning is an indivisible process, teachers only understand the demands of students and help students to complete the learning process in order to achieve win-win situation. In the process of College English teaching, the cultivation of emotional literacy is very helpful for the improvement of students' English ability.

Therefore, schools can add more culture oriented courses to enhance the overall quality of students. In College English teaching, developing English literature teaching can not only improve students' English ability and comprehensive quality, but also enable students to get involved in all kinds of excellent literary works and enhance their ability to perceive language. Let them discover themselves in literary works, bringing some positive and progressive ideas in their works into realistic work and student environments to increase the thickness of their lives. In addition, teachers should combine the actual situation of the student group to carry out the feasible curriculum, which plays a very important role in giving full play to students' subjective initiative and improving learning experience. Of course, literary works also contain the author's thinking of human society and also have a very positive effect on cultivating the humanistic emotions of students. From the current state of the cultivation of talents strategy, emotion cultivation is one aspect of the education sector in recent years of concern, but also develop a new idea of the excellent students in the context of globalization, which also helps students quickly into a hand this changing world. In the current process of College English teaching, teachers can select some excellent works to enable students to learn, to explore the rich human emotions and human resources, and to connect with each other in daily English language learning. Such measures not only help students to accumulate the necessary English professionalism, but also cultivate a positive attitude towards life, which is also a nurturing influence on students' emotions.

## 5. Conclusions

Emotional aspects are the most important factors to affect students' language learning, which motivate and drive students' learning activities. In the college classroom, the teachers play an important role in the cultivation of students' emotional literacy. Building one's Emotional Literacy has a lifelong impact. Many parents and educators, alarmed by increasing levels of conflict from young schoolchildren to university students, from low self-esteem to Internet addiction, are rushing to teach students the skills necessary for emotional literacy. Literature teaching in College English teaching with the passage of time highlights the important role that it can and English based languages daily learning to complement each other, mutual control, not only to further consolidate the basic ability of students, or the cultivation of students' emotional attitude, but also on the main development direction of College English teaching.

## References

- [1] Lotecka, L. (1974) A project advocating humanistic education: An evaluation of its effect on public school teachers. *Journal of Drug Education*, 4(2), 141--149
- [2] Steiner, C. with Perry,P.(1997) *Achieving Emotional Literacy*. London: Bloomsbury.
- [3] Jane Arnold(eds.) *Emotions and Language Learning* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing 2000, 2-3
- [4] Brumfit, C.J. (1986). Reading skills and the study of literature in a foreign language. In C.J. Brumfit & R. Carter(eds.)
- [5] Neophytou L, Koutselini M, Kyriakides L. The Effect of Teachers' Personal Beliefs and Emotional Intelligence on Quality and Effectiveness of Teaching[J]. *Navigating in Educational Contexts*, 2011:207-224.
- [6] Aznur Hajar Abdullah, Shaista Wasiuzzaman, Rosidah Musa. University quality and emotional attachment of undergraduate students in a private higher education in Malaysia[J]. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 2015, 42(7).
- [7] Simor P, Krietsch K N, Köteles F, et al. Day-to-Day Variation of Subjective Sleep Quality and Emotional States Among Healthy University Students—a 1-Week Prospective Study[J]. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 2015, 22(5):625-634.

- [8] Quin D, Hemphill S A, Heerde J A. Associations between teaching quality and secondary students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in school[J]. *Social Psychology of Education*, 2017(1):1-23.
- [9] Park H H, Jang M Y. The Effect of Nursing Students' Smartphone Addiction and Emotional Intelligence Level on Quality of Life[J]. 2017, 11(2):217.
- [10] Mckenna J W, Kim M K, Shin M, et al. An Evaluation of Single-Case Reading Intervention Study Quality for Students with and at Risk for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. [J].