

“ PUBLICATION MECHANISM ” IN TEACHING ENGLISH WRITING

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Abstract

Starting from the anatomy and expansion of the concept of “ Publication ” , the paper explores the functions of “ Publication ” interpreted within the framework of Maslow s human needs hierarchy , and finds that an adequate and efficient “ publication mechanism ” can serve both as an incentive to meaningful writing and as a practical way of achieving the integration of knowledge and emotion in college English teaching . Three yearly magazine publications have provided sound support for the mechanism of publication .

Key words

publication mechanism ; English writing teaching ; self actualization ; knowledge emotion integration

1 . Introduction

Research in teaching English writing (TEW) has attracted considerable attention in recent years , with Write to learn experiment (Wang 2000) prevalent nation -wide . Prevailing in western countries are Formalist , Current -Traditional , Rhetorical , Expressive , Process , Discipline centered Genre Analysis approaches (Berlin 1982 ; Silva 1990 ; Johns 1990 ; Qi 2000) . Whichever method is chosen , the human factor must be taken into consideration to achieve a desirable effect . Although Expressive and Write (long) to learn methods have placed some weight on emotional factors in TEW , the emphasis still lacks adequacy and persistence . Starting from the anatomy and expansion of the concept of “ Publication ” , the paper explores the functions of “ Publication ” interpreted within the framework of Maslow s human needs hierarchy , and finds that an adequate and efficient “ publication mechanism ” can serve as an incentive both for writing meaningfully and for achieving the integration of knowledge and emotion in college English teaching . Three yearly magazine publications have provided sound support for the mechanism of publication .

2 . What does “ Publication ” mean ?

“ Publication ” is the noun form of “ publish ” which means “ to make publicly known ” in Webster s New World Dictionary (1980 1149) and in a Chinese dictionary named Cihai (A Sea of Words , 1979 490) . This definition only focuses on the purpose of the action with other aspects all open . Essential to publication are the time span , channels , and functions . The time spans from motivation in discussion to a clearer picture in discussion and actual composition , till after -writing communication with appreciation , suggestion for modification , and publication . Actually , every step offers a publication of some kind , which means that publication is a PROCESS not just a RESULT . Publishing channels encompass the oral (as in class discussion or presentation) , the written (as on loose leaf , paper , or webpage) , and the performing (as in a drama or a film) . As to the functions , there are achieving understanding , securing recognition , and fulfilling the potential of oneself or others . The last function links publication with Maslow .

3 . Between Functions of Publication and Maslow s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow s Hierarchy of Needs ,sometimes called “ Maslow s Needs Pyramid ” or “ Maslow s Needs Triangle ” ,commands seven levels (1943 :373-386) — Physiological Needs , Safety /Security Needs , Belongingness and Love Needs ,Esteem Needs ,Cognitive Need ,Aesthetic Needs ,and Self-actualization . The top of the pyramid of needs is Self-actualization ,the instinctual need of a human to make the most of their unique abilities . While higher level of needs generate deeper internal happiness and richness ,Self-actualization promises summit of happiness —“peak experiences ” . A “peak experience ” ,no matter how transient ,may help the individual to complete a continuous noble meaning of life ,thus transcending normal life itself .

Human needs can be met in varied ways ,and publication is an effective one in satisfying almost all seven levels .

Physiological needs are to achieve homeostasis through the consumption of food ,drink and air , achieving adequate sleep ,and a comfortable temperature ,etc . Some form of publication can directly or indirectly benefit the doer financially ,thus meet his material need in a sense .

Safety or security needs are roughly categorized to include many aspects ,all of which are connected with keeping rank ,law and order . Whereas a single publication may help the writer to show his ability in certain field and gain some place there ,repeated success can be expected to enhance his place and security .

Love /Belonging needs ,involving emotionally based relationships in general ,show that humans want to belong to groups ,whether it be clubs ,work groups ,religious groups ,family ,gangs ,etc . ,feeling loved ,accepted ,and needed by others . The definition of “ Publication ” ,“to make publicly known ” , displays a clear sociability ;a publishing individual is always sharing his experiences ,feelings ,and ideas by certain media with certain audience that is supposed to be interested in and accept his writing .

Esteem needs consist of two versions —the need for the respect of and recognition by others ,and the need for self respect . Publication establishes concern ,appreciation ,and reputation ,creating in the doer a sense of success which in turn brings recognition by others ,and self respect .

The need to know and to understand ,the Cognitive need ,is a desire to be aware of reality ,to satisfy curiosity ,to understand ,to systematize ,to organize ,to analyze ,to look for relations and meanings . To convince readers ,a writer would resort to scientific analysis and support with data and reasoning —all done systematically .

Aesthetic needs are those for order ,for symmetry ,for beauty ,for closure ,for completion of the act ,for system ,and for structure . Publication not only satisfies the need for order and beauty better than a random talk ,whim of the moment ,or handy notes but also means completion of the writing act that releases tension .

Whereas the lower needs can be met and stop being motivators in one's life, self-actualization is the enduring motivation or driver of behavior. Self-actualization is the instinctual need of a human to reach one's full potential as a person. “A musician must make music, the artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be” (1954: 383). Once these “needs” — from physiological through aesthetic — are achieved, each individual will become self-actualized. Success in publishing one's work may elicit “peak experience”, frequent occurrences of which are energized moments of profound happiness and harmony, facilitating transcendence of mediocrity in normal life.

4. Publishing mechanism in teaching English writing

In most people's mind the concept of “Publication” is quite narrow. They pay little heed to its functions and know even less about the forms and channels of publishing. They think that “Publication” means the written work formally coming out in the form of a book or other printed form, and only those talented scholars are entitled to have their works printed on paper, so publication goes beyond reach of people outside of a privileged few. However, according to our analysis in section 2 there are at least three publishing channels, i. e., writing, speaking and performing, and each channel embodies a variety of forms. Writing can appear in the form of books, magazines, newspapers, Internet, blackboard newspaper, wall newspaper, etc. Speaking can come in the form of oral presentation, panel discussion, recording, etc. Performing can take the form of reciting, putting on plays, singing, etc. All these forms serve the purpose of making the ideas known to the public.

Now that there are so many forms of publishing available, it should not be difficult to publish students' compositions in English teaching. Collections of selected works, English magazines, English newspapers, English web sites, wall newspaper, reading and appreciation, group discussion and play performance are all possible forms to share students' compositions. Among these forms, wall newspaper, model reading and group discussion are applicable to any English class. Many English learning web sites and even class web pages have been established in some universities, making it possible to publish students' compositions in certain columns. Excellent ones may also be recommended to English periodicals and it will be a great stimulation to those students who can find their work recognized by more readers. It is also practical to have the best of students' compositions published in a collection, as is done in Guangdong Foreign Studies University and Wuhan University. Plays written by students may also be performed by themselves in English Evenings, which is also a form of publishing as mentioned above. But publishing that we emphasize here should not be an arbitrary act if it were to produce an ideal and long-lasting effect. This requires a mechanism for better supervision and higher advancement. In Modern Chinese Dictionary, “mechanism” refers to “the structure, function or the interrelation” of a machine or an organ (1983: 523). The publishing mechanism in this paper connotes the interconnection and reciprocity between different forms of publishing. At the initial stage, writing teaching may start from group discussion in which one student can “publish” his composition to other group members. From this he can enjoy being appreciated by his peers and also get advice from others for follow-up revisions. At the second stage, the good ones among the revised compositions may be posted on classroom wall newspaper or the class homepage. Then the best compositions from those chosen in the second stage may be re-polished and then posted on the English web site of the university. After more revisions, the compositions that have been posted on the university web site may be recommended to English periodicals for publication in the traditional sense, i. e., in printing form. However, this procedure is not a rigid rule, and a composition may not have to go through every stage as listed here. This mechanism is established to ensure that every student will get at least one article published, at any stage, so that he or she can feel the pleasure of being appreciated by his peers. Thus students will be motivated to produce more without being pushed.

Does the publishing mechanism satisfy students' needs for self-actualization? Three yearly magazine publications have provided sound support for the mechanism of publication.

5. Three cases of progressive publication: from mechanism to movement

Inspired by the “publication mechanism”, we conducted in two classes we taught in 2005 an experiment of publishing compositions by second-year students majoring in electronic information and social sciences. The students were encouraged to select a best work from their writings in English since

entering the university ,revise them after sincere discussion with peers or the teacher ,and submit them for publication in a magazine called Our Voices . Aiming at a better presentation ,most writers revised time and again with careful considerations . In this course ,they assimilated composition techniques and became more aware of the English language in use . The initial effort seemed encouraging both to students and to teachers though the publication mechanism was only beginning to function in one step ,for some contributors failed to hold a proper group discussion before handing in for the editor to take care .

In September ,2005 ,“New English Writing Club ” was founded in Suzhou University relying on the publication mechanism to promote English writing . The new mechanism consisted of three steps —oral presentation in class ,group discussion ,and publication in magazine . In April ,2006 ,22 pieces selected from all colleges and schools were assembled in the club magazine Fun with Writing I ,copies of which were distributed to every class . As expected ,the publication mechanism worked better this time because many more essays underwent careful revision after group discussion with suggestions for modification . Therefore the mechanism entitled students ,especially contributors to both magazines ,to surer command of language and keener awareness in writing .

Considering the limited range of student benefit reapers and simple steps in publication ,the club started a webpage on SudaCEO (Suda College English Online , <http://222.92.21.147/SudaCEO>). Columns opened include Initial Pub(lication) ,Revision Pub ,Memorial Pub ,and others . The working mechanism runs from oral presentation in class to webpage display to group discussion to club magazine or campus English newspaper . Publication through more links promotes students enthusiasm for writing , helping to improve considerably their composition capabilities and linguistic level . In this chain of publishing links , web publication is of special importance because of its speed ,capacity ,low cost , unlimited mobile visitors ,while paper publication in the traditional forms of newspapers and magazines brings deeper encouragement due to the permanent safe keeping ,formality ,and tangibility . Either e - publication or paper publication is indispensable ;A sustainable publication mechanism should take web publication as its main link with magazine publication as summary at regular time interval . In August , 2007 ,mainly based on e publication ,the mechanism ran to its final stage of the paper publication Fun with Writing II . The fresh issue has received wide appreciation and positive comment from both within and outside the university .

6 . Conclusion

The above needs theory and the club activities and magazines have shown that the publication mechanism helps students to achieve self actualization —that offers a chance to solve the universal problem of disintegration of knowledge and emotion . Studies show that knowledge has become the only link between teachers and students ,so language learning becomes a pain in a dull atmosphere . In his book “Freedom of Learning ” ,an American psychologist states that meaningful learning relies on “some attitudes of the relationship between the facilitator and the learner ”(Fang 1987) . In a survey ,over 99 .71 % of the teachers hope to have emotional communication with their students ,but only 8 .81 % of them have really put it into practice (Xiang 2004) . One important cause for this phenomenon is that there is no practical and effective channel for such communication . Fortunately ,the publishing mechanism can serve this purpose by supplying a bridge for better teacher student relationship ,student cooperation and combination of in class tutoring and after class practice . It can help to achieve the integration of knowledge and emotion in teaching . So the extensive employment of publication mechanism will not only help students “ write to learn ” but also “ write to communicate ” ,and motivate them to self actualize .

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