

# An Exploration of Senior High School English Teaching Based on Rogers' Humanistic Learning Theory

Xuran Zhao

Teacher Education Institute, Hebei Normal University, Shijiazhuang 050024, China.

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**Abstract:** The Humanistic Learning Theory emerging in the 1960s and 1970s emphasizes fully manifesting the students' subjective position and utilizing teacher's role as a facilitator in education, advocates the cultivation of the "whole" child, and stresses the learning process and learning ability. And the theory serves as an important source of inspiration and reference for English teaching in China. Based on a psychological perspective, this paper takes senior high school English teaching as the research object, exploring the advantages of using Rogers' humanistic learning theory and giving inspirations for senior high school English teaching.

**Keywords:** Rogers' Humanistic Learning Theory; Senior High School English Teaching

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## 1. Introduction

According to the General Senior High School English Curriculum Standard (2017 edition), the English curriculum integrates instrumental and humanistic characteristics. English curriculum aims to develop students' language abilities, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability. It emphasizes both language competence and humanistic literacy to prepare students for future English learning and life-long development. Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, emphasizes student-centered education, focusing on the holistic development of students and promoting the acquisition of learning strategies and healthy values. The humanistic learning theory provides a new perspective for achieving English curriculum goals and maximizing students' learning potential. It is highly inspiring for English teachers to establish correct teaching views and update their educational philosophy.

## 2. Basic principles of Rogers' humanistic learning theory

Rogers put forward a series of hypotheses on meaningful learning in "Freedom to Learn", providing a novel and unique perspective on children's learning. The following are the basic propositions of his learning theory.

### 2.1 Learning process

According to Rogers, emotion and cognition are inseparable in student learning. Learning cannot occur without considering children's emotional feelings. The aim of education is to cultivate well-rounded individuals who excel in both cognitive and emotional aspects. They are called "perfect human beings" or "fully functioning person" by Rogers, who suggests that the focus of education should shift from knowledge acquisition to the development of sustained learning ability. The success of teaching relies on students' mastery of learning methods rather than the curriculum itself. At this point, the curriculum knowledge system is [1]secondary. Only those who can learn, adapt to change, understand the impermanence of knowledge, and actively seek knowledge are truly educated.

### 2.2 Learning influencing factors

Rogers identified two main factors influencing learning. The first is the "human" factor, where schools and teachers should prioritize students' needs and place them at the center of learning activities. Teachers should have faith in students' potential and respect their personal experiences and individuality. The second is psychological factors, including motivation, values, attitudes, and emotional experiences. Rogers believes that everyone has an inherent motivation for self-improvement and teachers should create a positive atmosphere that promotes students' personal growth. Additionally, the evaluation from others also affects learning as it can lead to positive or negative experiences and subsequently impact students' learning activities.

### 2.3 Recommended learning style

Rogers promotes meaningful learning, which goes beyond acquiring knowledge and encompasses the development of attitudes, per-

sonalities, and behavioral patterns. It involves integrating all aspects of an individual's experience. The degree to which children learn from materials depends on their personal connection to the material and their awareness of its significance. Unlike Ausubel's view, Rogers emphasizes that meaningful learning should consider the learner's entire state during the learning process, involving their physical and mental being. Rogers highlights four characteristics of meaningful learning: full attention, spontaneous and automatic learning, comprehensive development, and self-assessment.

## **2.4 Recommended teaching philosophy**

Based on the humanistic perspective, Rogers believes that teachers should provide resources, create a conducive learning environment, and allow students to determine their own learning approach. The key to promoting student learning lies in fostering an atmosphere of sincerity, respect, concern, acceptance, and empathic understanding. Rogers suggests that teachers should act as facilitators and collaborators, respecting, understanding, and empathizing with students. They should anticipate and trust in the students' emotional and developmental growth and believe in their potential. Teachers should consistently treat students with sincerity, value their emotions, opinions, perspectives, and desires, and lead by example to build positive relationships and create an emotionally harmonious learning environment.

## **3. Implications of Rogers' humanistic learning theory for English teaching in senior high schools**

### **3.1 Teaching objectives focus on cognitive and affective unity**

Influenced by washback effect of the college entrance examination, English teaching often focuses excessively on vocabulary and grammar, neglecting students' core English competencies, especially their thinking capacity and learning ability. This contradicts China's advocacy for quality-oriented education. Therefore, when setting teaching objectives, teachers should not only aim for language knowledge acquisition but also focus on nurturing students' values, attitudes, emotions, and healthy personalities.

For instance, in the reading lesson "The Chinese Writing System" of book 1 unit 5 "Languages around the World" from People's Education Press for senior students, the teaching objectives extend beyond mastering new words related to Chinese characters. They also include understanding the development of the Chinese character system, developing reading strategies, enhancing cultural confidence, and cultivating logical thinking and expressive abilities through group debates.

### **3.2 Teaching methods emphasize learning by doing**

According to Rogers, "learning by doing" is the most effective way to improve learning, that is, allowing students to directly face various practical problems. Therefore, we should carefully design various activities to provide students with real situations, so that students can gain cognitive knowledge of things through active participation in activities. As English teachers, we should make full use of characteristics of the subject to provide students with activities such as role-playing, interviews, debates, English corners, etc... Therefore, students can acquire knowledge and feel the joy of learning English through a series of activities. And This will enable students to take the initiative to find out the problems in their daily lives, learn English and use English with questions, and be bold enough to practice and innovate.

### **3.3 Teaching Content focuses on meaningful learning**

The humanistic learning theory emphasizes respecting students, valuing their intrinsic motivation and needs, and selecting relevant teaching content to stimulate their interest and enhance their enthusiasm for learning. Meaningful learning occurs when students perceive the content as meaningful and applicable to real life. The newly revised senior high school English textbooks from People's Education Press are diverse, integrated with students' real-life experiences, and feature interesting topics that provide teachers with ample opportunities for implementing meaningful learning.

For instance, in the reading lesson "From Problems to Solutions" in Book 2 Unit 5 of English for Senior Students by People's Education Press, teachers can design pre-class questionnaires to explore the challenges faced by high school students at present. Presenting the questionnaire results during the lead-in section not only fosters a closer teacher-student relationship but also motivates student engagement. Additionally, teachers can incorporate familiar cultural heritage videos and pictures (such as paper cutting or Peking Opera) to prompt stu-

dents' reflection on heritage definition while promoting cognitive and emotional involvement.

### 3.4 Teaching evaluation Incorporates student self-assessment

According to Rogers, self-evaluation as the main basis for learning can develop students' independence, creativity, and autonomy. The General Senior High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 edition) advocate a diverse evaluation approach that combines formative and summative assessments. They emphasize the philosophy of evaluation for learning and consider students' emotions, attitudes, and values in English learning. However, traditional teaching mostly relies on teacher-centered evaluations which often result in limited feedback for students due to time constraints. This affects their learning quality. Therefore, self-evaluation advocated by humanistic learning theory has implications for senior high school English teaching.

Implementing student self-evaluation through the establishment of English learning portfolios is one way to achieve this goal. Portfolio assessment focuses on learners' reflection and self-assessment as its core element; hence it is also known as self-assessment[2]. For instance, improving English writing skills requires a step-by-step approach where student self-evaluation becomes crucial. Teachers can guide students in collecting their own writing works including first drafts, second drafts, or even third drafts to demonstrate progress. This process may also include self-assessment notes and plans for the next stage. Through such activities, students can develop their abilities in self-evaluation and reflection while improving their academic performance.

### 3.5 Teacher-student relationships emphasize harmony

Rogers believes that a harmonious classroom atmosphere promotes student development whereas a negative atmosphere makes them feel threatened, suppressed, and insecure. Establishing a good teacher-student relationship contributes to creating a harmonious learning environment. To establish such relationships teachers should first have a solid understanding of the English subject and be knowledgeable about students' lives and they should meticulously prepare the content for each class[3]. Secondly, teachers should skillfully use the question chain to guide students, allowing them to ask questions and providing them with positive feedback. Finally, teachers need to continuously enhance their own charisma and shape their personal style. Teachers should play the roles as guides and collaborators, in order that students can feel the charm of English with full attention and spontaneity.

## 4. Summary

The development of learning theories impacts the updating and progress of teaching theories. Important discoveries in psychology, especially in educational psychology, can influence education and teaching[4]. Applying Rogers' humanistic learning theory to high school English teaching aligns with the humanistic and instrumental aspects of the subject and promoting the development of contemporary secondary school students. However, no learning theory is perfect. Humanistic learning theory may overly emphasize students' individuality and emotions while neglecting knowledge impartation and systematicity, which may not conform the current teaching reality in China. Therefore, it is advocated to extract the essence of the theory and discard its drawbacks, and combine it with China's reality to form a teaching model suitable for the English language environment, so as to enhance the ability of English teachers to timely and flexibly apply humanistic learning theory in their teaching practices

## References

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