Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching and English

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Abstract

For the ten subjects examined in this phase of the study, there was a positive relationship between teachers' use of Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching principles and students' English scores. The TerraNova English subtest strands and overall PSSA standardized English test data also showed a positive relationship between PSSA data and TerraNova strand item (English) and Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching item.

Key words: teaching English, teaching items, diagnostic teaching, Heuristic teaching.

Introduction

The positive relationship between the two factors (Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching and Student English Scores) was expected because Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching is a successfully proven strategy for teaching English content. This is supported by the data provided by the past success of students who were instructed with this approach, both anecdotal and empirical (as implemented in the Drexel Diagnostic English and Science Learning Lab discussed in Chapter 1). The low English scores that correspond to the teacher with the highest Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching use represents a class with special learning needs (academically challenged in English). In fact, for the ten teachers whose class-wide English scores were available, teachers rate themselves up to 3.2 (on the 1 to 4 scale), which represents the positive relationship. Four is associated with the strongly agree response and for those teachers who rated themselves above a 3.2 in use of Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching principles, students' math scores dropped. In particular, the teacher with the highest Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching score (3.67) has significantly lower English scores due to special needs of the classroom (learning support).

Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching principles

Several factors may account for the few particular cases of higher self- ratings of Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching use which do not yield the expected higher student English scores (besides the special needs class). Trends from the Teacher Self-Report analysis indicate that teachers who took higher-level English content courses in a teacher preparation program also rated themselves as less confident in their use of Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching principles. The teachers who took lower level English courses to prepare for teaching rated themselves as strongly using the Heuristic Diagnostic Teaching principles especially as related to confidence in their own teaching of English content. This suggests that in some cases, self-efficacy may play a role in self-reporting as the idea of "self-believers" thrive in this type of

measure (Bandura, 1997). In this case, the trend suggests that teachers, who had more postitive experiences in English, had more opportunities to be exposed to successes and failures and to understand what they know and what they may not know in English lending to more accurate self-reporting in content knowledge confidence. Reisman's (1993) findings suggest a similar indication of an inverse relationship between teachers' self-rating of English content knowledge as measured in a Semantic Ditferential and actual content knowledge as measured in a multiple strand content knowledge assessment (Sequential Assessment of English Inventory). In other words, those teachers who rated themselves highest in math content knowledge, scored lowest in content tests. This may account for the teachers who rated themselves 4 (strongly agree) as those with the lower student class-wide English scores, and the reason that 3.2 reflects the point in which the positive correlation begins to curve in a negative direction.

The individuality of a person

One of the most obvious things about human beings is that they differ; they differ not only in size, shape and appearance, but also in conduct even those who look alike -as in the case of identical twins-are far from identical behavior. Indeed, there is very reason to believe that no two reasons are psychologically identical. We usually notice that individuals differ physically, before we become aware of the fact that they are also differ in behavior. Marked differences in height weight, color, and other aspects of physique impress us immediately. But we usually have closer acquaintance With the individual before we appreciate how much his or her behavior marks him or her off from other people. Some behavioral differences are of course more obvious than others. In our vocational activities, we differ a great deal. The same is true in the field of recreation. But in some aspects of behavior we differ less. For example, we speak the same language, although perhaps with different accents and with different facility, and we talk upright, in typically fashion, even there may be marked differences in gait.

We also differ in abilities. In some we differ more than in others. Most of us can learn such relatively simple skills as driving a nail of cutting with scissors. In acquiring such activities, we do not usually differ a great deal one from the other. But when highly complex skills are involved, individual differences become quite obvious. The most skilled person may be many times as skillful as the least skilled. Some may be not be able to learn the skill at all; this is especially true if it calls for a high level of reasoning ability. The person skilled in higher English for example has left most of us far behind there is also variations within the individual. None of us is equally proficient in all things. We may be good in reading and poor in mechanical skill. We may have a high level of musical ability and average or even poor, scholastic ability. We may differ with respect to verbal and quantitative abilities doing much better in English and literature, courses for example, than in those which, like English and require thinking in quantitative terms. Differences in ability have been recognized since ancient times and it has been rather generally concluded that the ideal society would be one in which, among other thons, each person contributes in accordance with his abilities it is only in recent times, however that individual differences have required much attention form scientists.

'When teachers have "sensitivity to context" by having an awareness of the factors influencing academic performance, they are better able to adapt teaching to fit the needs of the individuals in a class (Solomon, 1999). As noted by Reisman (1987), HDT is a problem-solving approach to teaching English that considers learner characteristics of students, including affective characteristics (i.e. social and emotional). When understanding a student's strengths and weaknesses in English, it is important to understand how they feel towards the learning experience.

Conclusion

There are many factors that affect students' English learning, such as how one's positive or negative perception of English and perception of their teacher or parent's attitude towards the subject can affect learning (Aiken, 1972). An example of an affective factor is high school students citing boredom and a general lack of interest in their classes as the reasons for dropping out of school (Public Broadcasting Service, 2006). However, according to the NCTM (2006) students in grades three and four report liking English and perceive it as relevant and necessary. According to Bandura (1993) self-belief, often referred to as 'self- efficacy', can be hindered by negative experiences or fostered by positive experiences in school situations. Gardner's (1993) interpersonal intelligence such as relating to others as well as intrapersonal strengths such as perceiving situations and making judgments are also affective learner characteristics that can play an important role in learning.

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