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学位論文要旨

Chapter 1: Education According to Individual Differences

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (2012), approximately 6.5% of students in mainstream public elementary and junior high schools suffer from some kind of behavioral or learning difficulties. English teachers in mainstream classes have reported the troubles and difficulties they face when teaching English (Kagata et al., 2014). Tachibana et al. (2004) revealed that teachers in junior high school did not have enough knowledge about special needs education (SNE).

In the field of English education, there are some studies concerning dyslexia (e.g., Murakami, 2011; Murata, 2014, August); however, there are few studies of behavioral or communicational difficulties, particularly those of students who do not demonstrate intellectual disabilities.

The aim of this research is to seek a system of initial English teacher education in which teachers would be taught to integrate knowledge of English teaching and that of SNE by considering three interrelated standpoints: English learners with behavioral or communicational difficulties, English teachers, and prospective English teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review of English Learners' Characteristics

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature about individual difference factors: learning styles, anxiety, and working memory. In addition, in this dissertation, I considered autistic traits as individual differences. Autistic traits include hypersensitivity, difficulty in switching attention, difficulty in imagining other people's feelings or thoughts, and anxiety about the unknown (Ono et al., 2010); hence, sensory learning preferences, anxiety, and working memory are considered to be related to autistic traits.

Although individual difference factors and English performance have often been examined, the relationships between these factors have not yet been explored, particularly in learners with behavioral or communicational difficulties.

Chapter 3: Exploring the Characteristics of English Learners with Autistic Traits

To explore the characteristics of learners with autistic traits, three studies were conducted.

- Study 1a explored the relationships between autistic traits, learning styles, and anxiety. Among autistic traits, social skills were negatively correlated with group, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles. Intragroup differences showed that learners with autistic traits had both strong and weak skills; therefore, we should focus on strength of each learner. There was no significant correlation between autistic traits and anxiety.
- Study 1b revealed the levels of anxiety caused if the preferred learning styles of learners were mismatched with the way they were taught. There were five groups with similar tendencies of anxiety regarding absence of written English in each public elementary school. The pupils in each group had different needs for written English.
- Study 1c identified the relationship between English vocabulary size and autistic traits. There was moderate correlation between capacity for phonological short-term memory and receptive vocabulary size, but no significant correlation between this and productive vocabulary size.

Chapter 4: Literature Review of SNE in Teacher Education

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature of teacher education for dealing with diverse students. Teacher education systems in England, Sweden, Australia, Italy, and Korea were summarized. These countries can be divided into two groups. The first group contains Italy and Australia. In this group, SNE teachers are assigned to particular classes and in charge of the classes with mainstream teachers. The second group comprises England, Sweden, and Korea, where SNE teachers are professional teachers who are in charge of teaching students with special educational needs in special education classes or schools. The first system may lead to mainstream teachers' dependence on SNE teachers for teaching students with special needs. Mainstream teachers do not necessarily learn about SNE or disorders because professional teachers are in their classes. In the second system, where mainstream teachers often send students with special needs to SNE classes for specific lessons, the mainstream teachers' responsibility has been considered in the place not students they face.

In Japan, English competency is often seen as the main measure of an English teacher's ability, and teachers tend to focus mainly on their knowledge of English or English education. However, as specified by MEXT (2015e), subject area and teaching profession area should be integrated. Prospective teachers therefore need to integrate their knowledge of English education and that of SNE.

Chapter 5: Instruction in SNE for In-Service English Teachers

In Study 2a, challenges or difficulties in teaching English to students with behavioral or communicational difficulties were explored by a questionnaire survey of English teachers in public junior high schools in Tokyo and Chiba. The survey found a mismatch between instructional methods and the learning styles of students with behavioral or communicational difficulties. Teachers were also aware that they did not have enough knowledge of SNE and the characteristics of students with behavioral or communicational difficulties

and that their knowledge was insufficient to provide adequate support to their students. In addition, they did not know of the roles of SNE coordinators and SNE schools.

Study 2b explored how English teachers in a seminar about SNE in English education attempted to resolve a hypothetical case and how they changed after the seminar. The discussion of the hypothetical case worked as the opportunities for the participants to share their difficulties, problems, and feelings. The structure of the seminar—instruction, hypothetical case discussion, and feedback—was assumed to be suitable for them. They utilized what they learned from the lecture during the discussion, then the instructor provided additional information to them. Finally, they reflected on their learning after the seminar. This process deepened their understanding of the characteristics of students with developmental disorders, particularly autism spectrum disorders.

Chapter 6: Effects of SNE Instruction on Pre-Service English Teachers

In initial teacher education, I instructed prospective English teachers on the characteristics of developmental disorders, especially autistic traits (Studies 3a and 3b). I examined how the prospective English teachers analyzed the hypothetical case, which included teaching students with difficulties in English classes, and how they changed after the instruction. The needs of the prospective teachers during initial teacher education were also explored. The prospective teachers had difficulties in imagining the situation described in the hypothetical case due to a lack of knowledge and experience of learners with autistic traits. They needed the opportunity to observe English classes that included students with behavioral or communicational difficulties. In Study 3c, I provided instruction about individual differences to the prospective English teachers in their second year of teacher education. I explored how they recognized students' differences. They appeared to view a class as consisting of two or three subgroups defined by: the students' (English) ability, individual introvert/extrovert personalities, likes/dislikes, and good/bad at English or communication. Some of them considered provision of the same teaching materials or activities to all students as “treating students equally.”

Chapter 7: Overall Discussion

In this chapter, the results obtained from all studies were summarized and their implications were examined. The most remarkable finding from the studies of English learners with autistic traits was the incompatibility of major instruction styles with the learning styles preferred by the learners. When we focused on intra-personal differences, we found that each learner had strong skills or preferences in some area. In practice, the English teachers experienced difficulties in teaching English to students with behavioral or communicational difficulties, and they acknowledged that they had insufficient knowledge of the characteristics of those learners and how to support them. The prospective English teachers did not have enough experience of communicating with learners with autistic traits, which caused their difficulties in resolving the hypothetical case describing a student with communicational difficulties. They needed opportunities to observe English classes including students with behavioral or communicational difficulties during their initial English teacher education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, considering the overall discussion and implication, I suggested a model of English teacher education. At universities, where initial teacher education is provided, teacher educators should provide opportunities to integrate knowledge of the characteristics of behavioral or communicational difficulties and knowledge of English education. This could include, for instance, a demonstration-lesson for a class including students with behavioral or communicational difficulties and discussion of a hypothetical case involving students with difficulties. Moreover, prospective English teachers should visit SNE classes for students with behavioral or communicational difficulties (but not with intellectual disabilities) or resource rooms to observe English classes or do a short practicum.