

Constructivist Design of College English Drama Competition and its Positive Effect

Liu Qi

Xiamen University Tan Kah Kee College, Xiamen, China.

Abstract

Students from independent colleges hope to learn English well, but because of their weak foundation, they find it more and more difficult to learn English and gradually lose interest in it. Drama performances in the second class can stimulate their interest in English learning and enhance their awareness of intercultural communication. From the constructivist perspective, this paper studies on college English drama competition in Xiamen University Tan Kah Kee College, puts the contestants as the object, based on a series of extracurricular teaching activities such as controlling the sound, imitating British and American accent, appreciating and adapting the scripts as well as training the skills of stage performance and the like, to create excellent drama show, and tries to explore how to hold English drama competition can better cultivate students' intercultural communication ability, improve their oral English level, enhance their creativity and critical thinking ability.

Keywords

English Drama Competition; College English; The Second Class; Constructivist Theory.

1. Introduction

The latest edition of the College English Guide points out that one of the important tasks of college English courses is to conduct intercultural education. Language is the carrier and component of culture. Students can learn more about foreign society and culture through English learning, enhance their understanding of different cultures, strengthen their understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and cultivate their intercultural communication ability. [1]

Students in independent colleges have a love-hate relationship with English learning. They want to learn English well, but because of their weak foundation, they find it more and more difficult to learn English, and gradually lose interest in it. At present, the main problem most English learners facing is lack of practice. College English classroom teaching is still dominated by teachers' imparting and supplemented by interaction. There is even no interaction. Many English teachers ignore the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence. In the process of drama performance in the second class, students can experience the role of cultural identity and social relations at close range, fill the gaps of language and culture in book learning, and help stimulate their interest in English learning and enhance their awareness of cross-cultural communication.

From the constructivist perspective, this paper studies on college English drama competition in Xiamen University Tan Kah Kee College, puts the contestants as the object, based on a series of extracurricular teaching activities such as controlling the sound, imitating British and American accent, appreciating and adapting the scripts as well as training the skills of stage performance and the like, to create excellent drama show, and tries to explore how to hold English drama competition can better cultivate students' intercultural communication ability, improve their oral English level, enhance their creativity and critical thinking ability.

2. Constructivist theory

Constructivism emphasizes students' subjectivity and subjective initiative and thinks that teachers play an auxiliary role in education. Teaching should be based on the existing learning and cognitive experience of learners to promote the increase of new knowledge points, instead of using the filling teaching method. Situational teaching proposed by constructivism means that learners' knowledge is acquired with the help of external forces under certain circumstances. These external forces include the cooperation between people, exchange and use of necessary information, etc. The situation in the learning environment must be conducive to the meaning construction of the learning content. An ideal learning environment should include four parts: situation, collaboration, communication and meaning construction.

In English drama performance, the teacher is the helper, and the student is the major participant. Each student bears an independent and complete role and gives play to his initiative and independence in learning. At the same time, drama performance usually requires the participation of a team of students, integrating collaboration and communication into the learning process. In addition, drama has ups and downs of plots, vivid performances, and strong stories, which can provide interesting situations and language environments for English learning, effectively promote learners' enthusiasm for meaning construction in language learning, and improve students' comprehensive language use ability.

3. Constructing design of college English drama competition

Holding English drama competition, on the one hand, is the exchange and collision of Chinese and Western culture, providing students with the opportunity to exchange and study, strengthen their cultural consciousness and cultural confidence. On the other hand, it is to pay attention to the cultivation of each student's comprehensive English ability, encourage students to adapt or create independently and actively, give students the opportunity to fully display and release themselves, strengthen the tension of the school's artistic ideological pattern, and establish a good campus atmosphere of openness, inclusiveness, freedom and positivity.

In Xiamen University Tan Kah Kee College, English Drama Competition has a history of 12 years. It is a competition held by the school for a long time, and also a platform to show contemporary college students' communicative competence and style in English. Each year, nearly 300 people apply for the competition, and more than 40 teams enter the first round of auditions, which will eliminate half of the teams. After the interval of 2-3 weeks, semi-finals will be held, from which 6-8 teams will be selected to advance to the final. There will be 1 First Prize, 2 Second Prizes, 3 Third Prizes and several Excellence Prizes in the final.

Since the first competition, coaching activities for the participating teams have begun. In 2015, in order to further improve the English level of the participating students and improve the quality of their works, the College of English Language and Culture set up a special team of teachers to give systematic guidance to the participating students.

As an extension of classroom teaching and an active campus culture, the English Drama Competition really has a short performance time, while the preparation period before the performance is long, full of ideas and tedious work. After the audition, each semi-final team will be in the charge of one teacher. The identity of the teacher has changed from the interpreter in the traditional classroom to the instructor, facilitator and even participant in the drama performance. [3] According to the students' different English level and the characteristics of the entries, the tutoring plan will be made. The training will be conducted once a week on average, for 6-8 weeks, including pronunciation correction, phonetic imitation, character analysis, script reading, performance arrangement, etc. to help students learn as much interesting English knowledge and culture as possible from the play rehearsal. The goal is to help students produce

excellent drama works. In the teaching process, English knowledge and culture and drama performance skills are integrated.

After all, for English learners, context is the situation and environment in which they communicate in English. Constructivism holds that learning is a process of meaning construction realized by means of interpersonal cooperation with the help of others in a certain context, that is, in a social and cultural background. In the process of self-experience and assisted situational learning, learners can enrich their understanding of concepts, get learning experience and adjust themselves to different situations. In this way, learners can always construct various schemas flexibly and carry out active learning effectively no matter how the situation of applying knowledge changes. [2] Through effective conversations and consultations between teachers and students, or among students, during drama competitions, competition tutoring and group rehearsals, different learners' views and experiences on the same phenomenon and connotation can collide with each other, complement each other and bring forth the new, narrowing the blind area of understanding and expanding their horizons. For each drama training, therefore, effective significance construction needs teachers to stimulate students' autonomous learning interest, oriented by the interest, to lead the students to explore in different levels of collaborative learning and practice, to link together the old and new knowledge plus experience, to constantly test, adjust and correct cognitive content and process, and to complete construction of the meaning of knowledge and experience.

After audition registration and final competition, the tournament organizing committee respectively designs questionnaires to understand students' entry purposes, the feeling towards the whole process of the game, and their English learning gains. Analyzing the result of the investigation, the committee summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of the game, to provide valuable lessons that can be drawn lessons for the next game.

Students will complete an English proficiency test before and after the training. The test paper concentrates on the students' spoken English, and their ability of innovative thinking and cross-cultural communication. The difficulty level is close to the CET level. At the same time, for the latter two modules, some questions will be chosen from such courses as English National Culture, Social Etiquette, Speech and Debate, The Logic and so on. And in the process of tutoring, formative evaluation and summative evaluation will be combined together, in order to evaluate students' English proficiency more effectively, which also conforms with the view of constructivist theory.

4. Positive effect on students' English study

4.1. English drama competitions and relevant tutoring can help improve students' oral English

Students may forget their words during rehearsals of drama performances and competitions. Once one of the actors forgets the words and has no solution, the actors in the opposite part of the drama also stand there and do not know how to take the play. This situation will certainly affect the fluency of the performance of the drama work. In order to avoid the stagnation caused by forgetting the words, students are required to have certain ability of English improvisation. Therefore, the tutoring of the competition should focus on cultivating students' ability to understand the original lines and flexibly use their own words to explain the lines. Instead of memorizing lines only by rote, students should dig deeper into the meaning and function of lines in the plot combined with the plot of the drama. When students are engaged in the dynamic human interaction of the play, they can improvise and react realistically according to different characters and situations. Drama performance provides students with the opportunity to learn English and practice oral English, not only can mobilize all their senses and means of expression, but also let them feel and directly experience the situation of language

use, which has a positive significance for attracting students' attention to oral English expression. What's more, students have to rehearse with emotion. In almost every rehearsal, the "stage" is full of positive laughter and laughter, which makes some usually "silent" students and introverted students more active and relaxed to participate in it. [4] Oral English learning is no longer boring, but gets improved while in the play.

Therefore, English drama competitions and competition tutoring have the following benefits for the improvement of students' oral English. Firstly, this second classroom activity and practical teaching mode can combine teaching with fun, encourage students to speak, and change the task-oriented and teacher-centered mode to student-centered mode. Secondly, it can help students know more about history, culture, literature and other aspects of knowledge and expand their knowledge. Finally, students can effectively and skillfully integrate various courses (phonics, listening, speaking, intensive reading, extensive reading, literature, British and American general situation, etc.) to expand their comprehensive knowledge of English and improve their listening and speaking ability.

4.2. English drama competition and relevant tutoring can enhance students' creative ability and critical thinking ability

At present, college English classes still focus on technical knowledge imparting, ignoring the need for college students to improve such comprehensive quality as the logical thinking ability and innovation ability to find and solve problems and make conclusions. In the meantime, the current teaching methods are too single, machinery, and there is lack of relaxed and active class atmosphere as well as adequate interaction between students and teachers, which does not create a good environment for the cultivation of college students' English creative ability and critical thinking ability. [5] Script adaptation or creation, performance arrangement and other links are helpful to cultivate students' creative ability and critical thinking ability. In order to better interpret the classic plays, students need to consult the script and its background, culture and other materials, and on the basis of maintaining the charm and characteristics of the original play, imitate or adapt the existing Chinese and foreign plays or create new plays, and then the students themselves write and direct the performance, so that it has the characteristics of the new era and rich stage effects. In this process, students will apply the language and culture knowledge they have learned in practice, experience the cultural differences between China and the West at the same time, cultivate sensitivity, tolerance and flexibility to deal with cultural differences, and enhance their critical thinking ability. During the performance, students give full play to their rich imagination and innovative spirit. Through the adaptation or re-creation of lines and body movements, some plays are endowed with the characteristics of the new era and campus atmosphere, which fully highlights the personality and style of drama performance.

4.3. English drama competition and relevant tutoring can develop students' intercultural communication ability

In the process of preparing for the competition, English drama script can help students consolidate their memory and strengthen the memory effect, while rehearsal creates a strong language practice atmosphere for them. As the drama contains a large number of scenarios that simulate real life, students can be motivated to communicate and put their language knowledge into practice.

English drama competitions and competition tutoring are helpful to cultivate students' intercultural communication ability. First of all, English drama presents a vivid world of English culture, which broadens students' horizons and deepens their cognition of culture. In the process of appreciating plays and rehearsing performances, students can feel the charm of communication, and through the language, they can examine and experience the time-honored

but fresh and vibrant culture in front of them. Secondly, through the performance and appreciation of English plays, students' cultural and artistic appreciation has been improved, and the practice of language knowledge in each scene has also been enhanced. If students want to fully and accurately express the effect of drama, they must feel and experience the cultural connotations behind the drama personally, spark the sparks in the communication, so as to improve their intercultural communication ability in practice. Finally, English drama competition provides a good stage for the students; event coach gives the direction of the students' language learning and power; at the same time, game and rehearsal activities, not only exercise the students' good courage, but also help them to establish confidence, especially when they communicate with others in English. Gradually, they will have no stage fright any more, and express their own thoughts more freely and fluently.

5. Conclusion

English Drama Competition is an opportunity for cultural exchange and collision between China and the West. It is also a test of participants' learning ability and language level, and a platform for creators to show their works and release themselves. This paper has further improved the English drama competition mechanism and the competition guidance system. First of all, the addition of online auditions will help the school to better hold the English drama competition and attract more students to participate in the competition and show their talents. Drawing on the experience of previous competitions, eliminating the coarse elements and selecting the fine ones, extending part of the old competition system, and at the same time, according to local conditions, the research adds some new regulations. For example, the auditions are conducted on the Internet. The participating teams will record 5 minutes of excellent performance clips by themselves and upload the video to the designated email. The organizers will organize judges to score online and select the winning teams to enter the semi-finals. Secondly, the implementation of routine training, to give students timely and sufficient guidance, set up special lectures, and focus on solving problems, will help the college to better carry out the competition training, and help more students to improve the comprehensive use of English ability. Finally, according to the training records, teacher interviews, scores of College English final test, ability quiz of innovative thinking and cross-cultural communication, oral English testing, and the result of the combination of formative assessment and summative assessment, the research helps teachers to better assess the level of students' language, culture and thinking, cultivate students' intercultural communicative competence, improve their spoken English and enhance their creativity and thinking. It also helps attract the attention of the researchers to the design and teaching of the second class of college English drama under the influence of constructivism.

Acknowledgments

This paper is the periodical achievement of the project "Research on Application Model of College English Drama Teaching Method" (Project No. JGH2019017).

References

- [1] College Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee, Ministry of Education. A Guide to College English Teaching [M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2020.
- [2] Zhang Jie & Duan Cheng. On the Effectiveness of Drama Performance in the Reform of English Practice Teaching from the Perspective of Constructivism [J]. Contemporary Art Observation, 2014 (8): 171-173.

- [3] Meng Siying & Yang Hong. The Establishment of Campus English Drama Festival and Its Influence on Students' English Learning [J]. Science and Technology in Western China, 2012(5): 87-88.
- [4] Ge Guoliang. Educational Drama in University Oral English Teaching [J]. Journal of Cangzhou Normal University, 2016 (2): 124-126.
- [5] Sun He. The Necessity and Innovation Way of Cultivating College Students' English Critical Ability [J]. Chinese and Foreign Entrepreneurs, 2018 (23): 195.