

The Construction of a Cross-cultural Awareness in College English Teaching

A Strategic Study with English Original Films as the Medium

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Abstract—As an important international language, English plays an important role in cross-cultural communication. Proficient use of English in communication and exchange is the ultimate learning goal of every English learner. With the development of globalization, the learning task of English course is not just the understanding of English grammar and the memory of vocabulary any more. Learning English courses to understand western cultural concepts has become an important part of college English learning. Since language is an important element in the art of film, this paper studies the cross-cultural education in English teaching by taking the original English film as the medium, and analyzes the role of the original English film in English teaching and the construction of students' cross-cultural awareness.

Keywords—college English; cross-cultural awareness; construction; English original film; medium

I. INTRODUCTION

With the development of globalization in today's world, English, as a universal language, plays an important role in the communication of politics, economy and culture. English is a required course for every college student. The ultimate goal of college English learning is to skillfully use English in communication and exchange. In today's world of frequent economic, technological and cultural exchanges, cross-cultural education has become an indispensable and important element in college English courses. The integration of the original English movies in English classes makes students have an active interest in English learning, and deepens their understanding and cognition of western cultural concepts. These teaching advantages gradually make original English movies important materials for college English teaching.

II. THE ROLE OF ORIGINAL ENGLISH MOVIES IN PROMOTING ENGLISH TEACHING PRACTICE

A. Advantages of Language Situation

Art comes from life, so the story of film art also comes from real life. The English-speaking characters in the plot of the film and their living environment are important elements of the original English film. English movies can vividly show the lively expression effect produced by the characters

using English to carry on the dialogue. The choice of vocabulary, the application of intonation and the way of colloquial presentation of different characters are also in line with the character and living habits of different characters in the film. English learners can experience and feel English context more intuitively by watching original English movies. Students can feel the colloquial dialogue of characters through the plot of the film, and gradually have a certain understanding of the communication habits and ways of European and American life, and have a clearer understanding of their social etiquette, thinking habits and cultural ways.

B. Oral Practice

As a language subject, English proficiency in conversation and communication is the ultimate learning goal of English learners, and the teaching of spoken English is naturally an important part of college English teaching. The dialogue of characters in the original English movies can provide demonstration materials for college students' oral English learning directly. The vivid storyline and characters with different characters in the film provide a good platform for the presentation of various colloquial ways. While appreciating wonderful story, students can try to imitate characters' dialogues with classmates. This kind of practice can not only deepen students' memory of unfamiliar words and sentences, but also make students more truly understand the specific form of English colloquial characteristics. These have a subtle influence on students' oral English learning, which is conducive to improving students' ability to use English for practical communication.

C. Stimulating Students' Interest in Learning English

Film art is a comprehensive art form, with a combination of audio-visual three-dimensional appreciation effect. In the process of watching English movies, students' auditory perception of English language is an essential part. As the story progresses, learners' interest in learning English can be more stimulated. This interest gradually develops and internalizes into learning motivation, so that students' love for English movies at the beginning gradually turns into their love for English learning. Even after watching the film, students' aftertaste of the film plot naturally includes the memory of relevant lines in the film. Some wonderful plots

in the film are also conducive to being the object of discussion among students, providing excellent materials for cooperative learning and discussion research in English teaching, and creating a more relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere for English classes.

III. THE EMBODIMENT OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN THE ORIGINAL ENGLISH FILMS

A. Historical Events

History records the process and track of human development, so it is an important part of the cultural field. Many classic English films are also set in a special historical period, and the main content of the films is the storyline that can reflect the social situation at that time. The classic American film "Forrest Gump" tells the legendary experience of a retarded child from childhood to adulthood. His intellectual limitations did not limit his pace of running for life. His extraordinary life story is set in more than 30 years of American history, including the struggle of black people for human rights, the Vietnam war, the assassination of President Kennedy, Ping-pong diplomacy, and the Watergate Incident, etc. Through watching this film, the audience can have a more intuitive understanding of the historical period and some important historical events at that time. "Schindler's List" tells the story of Oskar Schindler, a German entrepreneur who tries to protect more than 1,100 Jews from being killed by the brutal and evil Nazi. The film is set in the historical background of the Second World War. Through the description of the film, the cruelty of the war, as well as the hardships that Jews had to face in order to survive in that period and the threats they had to face in their lives can be felt.

B. Religious Belief

The American film *The Da Vinci Code* tells the story of Robert Langdon, a semiotic expert from Harvard University, and Sophie Neveu, a French cryptographer, who work together to solve the mystery of a strange code found at the scene of the murder of a Louvre museum curator. The constant emergence of mysterious clues and the protagonist's meticulous logical reasoning are what attract the audience's attention. However, the groups featured in the film, such as the Priory of Sion and Opus Dei, as well as some precious and unique works of art and mysterious religious rituals, are all connected with Christianity. Therefore, while watching the suspense plot, the audience will also have an unforgettable impression on the mystery of religious elements. The American film "seven deadly SINS" is also associated with Christianity. Seven murders are used to coincide with the seven vices of human beings, which are respectively pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, lust and gluttony. The unsolved case is combined with religious feelings and human morality, which makes the audience ponder it over after watching.

C. Ideas

People living in different countries and regions have unique ideas and values belonging to their own group, and

the differences in these ideas can also be reflected in the film art. Heroism is an important embodiment of American culture and art, which is expressed in many classic American movies. For example, the interpretation of heroism in American culture can be seen from iron man and spider-man, all splendid stories in which heroes out of their own unique strong fighting capacity and a sense of divine mission fight bravely against evil forces and win at last. In addition to heroism, there is the yearning and pursuit of freedom in American culture. The classic love movie *Titanic* reflects the expectation of free love between the male and female protagonists. From the aspect of love freedom, people's pursuit of freedom in the American cultural concept can also be related to, which is also the ideology with western characteristics contained in many American movies.

IV. THE CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ORIGINAL ENGLISH FILMS

Intercultural communication ability belongs to the field of human social communication. The possession and improvement of this ability can make people better deal with cultural differences and cultural strangeness brought by regional differences. Of course, it is impossible for every student to have the opportunity to experience the foreign cultural atmosphere personally due to the limitations of practical conditions. In this sense, watching original English movies solves this problem very well. The wonderful plots, vivid plots, vivid characters and a lot of cultural information contained in the film can make the audience really feel the form and connotation of western culture. By watching English movies, English learners can not only enlarge their vocabulary and improve their English listening and speaking ability, but also have a more intuitive understanding of foreign social etiquette, religious customs and other aspects, which is of great help to students' language ability and cultural appreciation ability.

At the same time, there will be some non-western cultural elements in English movies. *Kung Fu Panda*, an American animated film, is one of the classic films integrating Chinese culture and western culture. The flexible use of Chinese elements in the film, including Chinese kung fu, Chinese-style houses and Chinese-style decorations, all of which make the film release a strong flavor of Chinese culture and art. The individual heroism complex in western culture, especially American culture also permeates the film. The cute panda Po shoulders the mission of fighting and defeating the evil and he finally beats the darkness so as to realize the dream of individual heroism. Chinese cultural elements and American heroism are cleverly combined in the field of film culture, which fully reflects the rich and distinctive cultural connotation of films.

V. APPLICATION METHOD USED BY TEACHERS TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL TEACHING THROUGH ENGLISH FILMS

A. Selection of Film Works

Numerous and varied as the original English films are, teachers' choice of English films in classroom teaching should not be arbitrary. First of all, the English films chosen should have pure and clear pronunciation and few dialects, because too many dialects will hinder students' cognition and understanding of the film, and it is not conducive to students' proper English learning. Secondly, the selection of films should follow the principle of "taking the easiest the first". Starting from the films with few characters and simple plot, it is convenient for students to understand and accept the original English films and promote their confidence in learning English. If the plot of the film is too complicated, especially if there are many characters, the mixing of different speed of speech and sound quality will deepen the difficulty of students' understanding of the film. For students who just try to improve their language ability by watching English films, their interest in learning will be affected by the obstacles encountered in the learning process. Finally, films with positive content should be chosen and vulgar and violent content should be avoided. If it is played in class, teachers need to make preparations in advance. It is better to capture valuable dialogues and fragments from the film and play them to students in a targeted way. Taking the "Forrest Gump" as an example, the dialogue between Gump and his mother before she died can be used as a good teaching material. "Life was like a box of chocolates, you never know what your are gonna get" is a classic line from this clip. If this sentence is marked separately on the blackboard, perhaps the student cannot have any impression of it, and they will not have the profound understanding and the experience to the truth which this sentence contains. But the meaning and effect will be very different if it is seen in the movie. Mother's encouragement to Gump at the end of her life and her reluctance to leave him in such a touching scene will make us remember her every line. Moreover, students can not only memorize English lines, but also deeply understand the great charm of kinship and maternal love, so as to realize the combination of knowledge and skills, emotional attitude and values in teaching.

B. Interaction Between Teachers and Students to Promote Students' Thinking

The cultivation of students' interest in learning is the key content of college English teaching reform mechanism. The addition of original English film appreciation in class can stimulate students' interest in learning English and improve their practical ability in English communication to a large extent. Before class, teachers should have a detailed understanding of the selected film, be familiar with the development of plot and the relationship between characters in the film, and master some classic dialogue lines. Based on the teaching purpose, corresponding teaching design should be made for the beginning, ongoing and the ending parts of film appreciation. The teaching appreciation in class should change the students' entertainment habit of watching movies

and give priority to study. This requires teachers to guide, explain and analyze students in some specific paragraphs, and guide students to think actively. Students can be required to imitate some lines to promote clear and accurate pronunciation. For example, when teaching the theme of "Living Green", teachers can show "An Inconvenient Truth", An American film about global warming which former President Al Gore participated in as a veteran environmentalist, to students in advance of the lecture. Through the appreciation of this film, students can understand what global warming is, what kind of consequences it will cause, and what need to be done to prevent the damage it causes. Through these questions, students have a deeper understanding of the significance of environmental protection, which helps students to better realize the classroom learning of the eighth unit, and generate the motivation to learn the knowledge related to environmental protection in the textbook.

C. Broadening Students' Cultural Background and Cultivating Their Artistic Appreciation

As mentioned above, some English films choose a specific historical period as the background for the development of the story. Through the appreciation of such films, students can also appreciate the social and cultural situation of a specific historical period. For example, there is an article in an English textbook that mainly tells the story of a quarrel between a couple in an ordinary American family. However, to a deeper understanding, behind a simple argument is the sensitive racist tendency of American society. Therefore, when teachers introduce the relevant knowledge of racism in the United States at that time, they can play films about racial discrimination, like the Oscar-winning film "Green Book", making them have a certain understanding of the racism tendency at that time and the tragedies caused by racism, so that they can have a deeper understanding of the theme expressed by the author in intensive reading textbooks.

VI. CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the above contents, the advantages and influences of the original English movies on English learners' English learning and English communication practice can be understood, playing an irreplaceable role in the construction of students' intercultural consciousness. English movies, with plot development and vivid dialogue, can arouse students' interest in English learning, transforming the boring learning atmosphere of English learning in the past, enabling students to unconsciously memorize lines and feel colloquial while appreciating the plot. Not only that, while expanding their English vocabulary and improving the English communication skills, the students also have an intuitive and real cognition and understanding of the life habits, ideas, social etiquette, religious beliefs and historical events of Chinese and western characters in the film, which deepens their cultural literacy. It also enables students to realize the perception and experience of western cultural connotation without going abroad, and strengthens the further development of students' cultural ideology. All these are the

important role of the original English films in college English teaching, and they are also valuable materials for college students to understand and recognize western culture.

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