

# The Cultivation of Humanistic Literacy and the Framework Construction for British and American Literature Course

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**Abstract**—The teachers in traditional British and American literature teaching are in the dominant state and it is easy to form a "teacher-centered" classroom atmosphere, ignoring the activity design of "student-centered" in teaching, neglecting the cultivation of students' analytical ability and critical thinking. This paper discusses how to cultivate students' humanistic literacy as the tenet by emphasizing "student-centered" in the teaching model in British and American literature course, focus on the improvement of reading, writing, oral expression and promotion of communication and cooperation consciousness, broaden the horizon of cultural knowledge, and form critical thinking and appreciation ability.

**Keywords**—humanistic literacy; British and American literature; course framework; students

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Ministry of Education revised the new curriculum standards, requiring "to fully tap the curriculum teaching of various disciplines to fully implement the education policy, implement the fundamental task of building morality and cultivate people, develop the unique educational value of quality education." "The report in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, proposed, from the height of implementing the fundamental task of morality-building and cultivating people, to improve the excellent traditional education style in China. Excellent traditional Chinese culture covers all disciplines. The college entrance examination, setting the topics from home and country loves, social awareness and personality cultivation, to fully convey the core ideas and values of Chinese culture, plays a good leading role. It is clearly proposed to strengthen the cultivation of humanistic quality. "Humanistic literacy is the foundation of students' core literacy, which is embodied in their basic abilities, emotional attitude and value orientation in learning, understanding and applying knowledge and skills in the humanistic field." It is a new understanding of humanistic education and the status, value and significance of humanistic curriculum in modern education.

The rapid development of economy makes people pay more attention to the acquisition of substantial benefits, neglect the construction of the spiritual world, and center on

utilitarianism and lack of spiritual pursuit. Many more people frequently suffer from psychological barriers, ruin of public morality, indifference to interpersonal relationships, uncivilized social behavior, moral decline and other issues. In the university education, there exists the phenomenon of focusing on the imparting of scientific knowledge and neglecting the cultivation of humanistic literacy, which leads to the decline of students' morality and accomplishment.

## II. IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION ON HUMANISTIC LITERACY

The topic of humanistic literacy education has been fiercely discussed recently. Its essence is the reflections and criticisms of educators and society on the real life and spiritual world, and it is also the exploration of ways to improve the quality of human in social and spiritual life. In the curriculum system for higher education, it is very important to enhance personal accomplishments and details, to understand the setting of the course of British and American literature in the world culture. On the one hand, it is helpful to cultivate college students' good psychological and moral qualities by learning to correctly view and analyze the various phenomena existing in modern society, and to solve the problems encountered in life by learning the social formation and history in the United Kingdom and the United States. On the other hand, with the study of the course and the understanding of the works, the ability of cultural appreciation and aesthetic consciousness have been enhanced, and the critical thinking and innovative consciousness have been gradually formed, and the sound personality has been fostered. It is necessary to strengthen and promote the study of language and culture, especially the improvement of foreign language proficiency as well.

"Humanistic literacy" is the spirit of "people-oriented and people-centered" embodied in the research ability, knowledge level and humanities. It embodies that man is the core of humanistic accomplishment, attaches importance to man's leading role and subject position, and pays close attention to man's spirit and thought. Humanistic accomplishment is mainly composed of humanistic knowledge and skill, humanistic ability and method, humanistic spirit and quality, among which humanistic

knowledge is the foundation, and humanistic ability and ways are the capability and method to analyze and solve problems among people and society, and human and nature. Humanistic spirit and literacy mainly refers to the understanding and application of outlook on life, world outlook and values in social life, humanistic consciousness and attitude, as well as feelings, interests and motivations for humanity. These spirits and qualities occupy a core position in the elements of humanistic literacy and directly determine where the humanistic literacy goes. Therefore, the course of British and American Literature in universities requires teachers to embody the core idea of "student-centered" humanistic literacy in the course design and framework, and pay attention to the cultivation of knowledge, ability and methods for students.

### III. THEORETICAL BASIS AND SURVEY

#### A. Theoretical Basis

In university education, humanistic courses mainly study the spiritual and cultural worlds of human beings. The value attribute of humanistic education needs to be realized by whole curriculum, while the course of British and American Literature always aims at cultivating students' humanistic literacy, and referring to the "missile-type" organization model proposed by Fonts Trompenaars (1993a, 1998b), a German management researcher, that is, task-oriented instructional design and management, while learning from the constructivist theory of "student-center", emphasizing learners' active search for knowledge, active discovery and active construction of knowledge to carry out teaching. It is necessary to strengthen the personal ability of analyzing and solving problems in groups and teams when cultivating the humanistic literacy and thinking ability, and develop their potential and consciousness of cooperation.

Trompenaars' theory for construction of culture has a great influence in the field of cross-cultural management, and his "missile-type" organizational culture---one of the four organizational culture types, is suitable for the teaching management design of literature courses. That is to say, teachers should emphasize the idea of "student-centered" plan and manage students' and curriculum design ahead of time in combination with the aim of cultivating humanistic literacy. The "missile-type" organizational culture is an equal, task-oriented culture. In this culture, tasks are usually performed by groups or project teams, but such teams are temporary groups and disband when the task is finished. None of the work done by members is pre-set and must be done or organized when there are tasks to be accomplished. Moreover, the team was set up to solve the problems that confronted them, and the members organize themselves spontaneously according to the given tasks, starting with a task that needed to be solved urgently

#### B. Survey Results

The students were English majors from XX Teachers College in Grade 2015 and Grade 2016, with a total of 100 students and a test rate of 99.7%. They have different learning abilities, self-requirements, goals and plans.

The results showed that 97.03% of the students said that the course of English and American literature was helpful to their study in terms of the importance. 82.18% of the students also thought that British and American literature would be helpful to their future work and life. 14.85% of them were not sure whether it would be helpful or not. In terms of learning motivation, 80.15% of the students said that the course was conducive to the improvement of literary appreciation, 84.16% thought it was conducive to the expansion of knowledge horizons, and 65.35% said that they were compelled to complete the credit requirements. In terms of teaching mode, 80.2% of the students said that it is advisable to use film, PPT and literary appreciation, 50.5% of the students thought that English and American literature learning should adopt student-centered, teacher-led teaching mode, and 49.5% of the students thought that it is advisable to use textbook-centered and properly supplement extracurricular materials. In the aspect of autonomous learning, 67.33% of them suggested poetry appreciation, 60.4% performance on the stage, 88.12% movie appreciation and 38.61% reading report. With reading 52.48% (in Chinese), 56.44% (in English), 74.26% (on the Internet), 80.2% (movies), 38.61% (pre-class and post-class self-study) and 36.63% (post-class self-review), most of the students have clear purpose and desire to study English and American literature.

### IV. DESIGN OF COURSE FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING

The design of teaching literature course emphasizes "people-oriented" and "student-centered" principle. According to the survey, the students have a better understanding of the importance of leaning British and American literature; clarification of learning motivation and goal of the course. There are obvious requirements for the planning of learning process and the course design for cultivating self-study ability. The schedule of learning process includes students' choice of courses according to their personal interests, students' pre-reading before class; classroom discussion; reading notes after-class; discussion in groups, flipped- video made by team cooperation; rehearsals of plays; reading and appreciation of fictions; term papers, and teacher-led discussion and after-class supervision. Such framework design changes the traditional teaching process for teachers, combines the construction of students' learning environment with the cultivation of their subject consciousness, stimulates their formation of creative and critical thinking, promotes the development of practical ability and humanistic spirit, and enhances students' interest in learning different cultures.

#### A. The Student-centered Course Framework

The framework design emphasizes that the organization and implementation of all teaching activities are planned for the students' learning output. It shows that students are the main body of learning activities and the constructionists of knowledge system. It starts from the pre-reading and writing notes before class to participating in classroom discussion on the text, historical background, characteristics of different literary schools in different historical periods, representative

writers, and the discussion about those works, even the enjoyment of the movies revised from the masterpieces after class, and rehearsals of the classical repertoire. The design of these activities makes every student participate in the process of learning and grasping the content of the course, reflecting the important process of their full participation. At the same time, the teachers' role has also changed from the dominator of the classroom activities to the facilitator and supervisor, and their function has been changed to the assistant and coordination to achieve the goal of "student-centered" study.

### B. Diversity of Learning Content and Evaluation in Course Structure

The design of course content changes the traditional state of classroom learning in which teachers explain alone the

content in the classroom. In the past, students learning only need to bring two ears in the classroom, taking notes. Now, the learning of the course is transformed into the style of pre-class preparation, class presentation and discussion, and after-class supplementary expansion. The content of the course not only requires students to master the knowledge and methods, but also exercise their ability, learn to judge and think as well, and improve the level of appreciation. Formative assessment is included in the main assessment items, including individual classroom discussion performance, term papers, and reading notes, combining with individual and group task participation awareness, including the flipped courseware, rehearsal repertoire performance, and comprehensive consideration of learning effects ("Fig. 1").

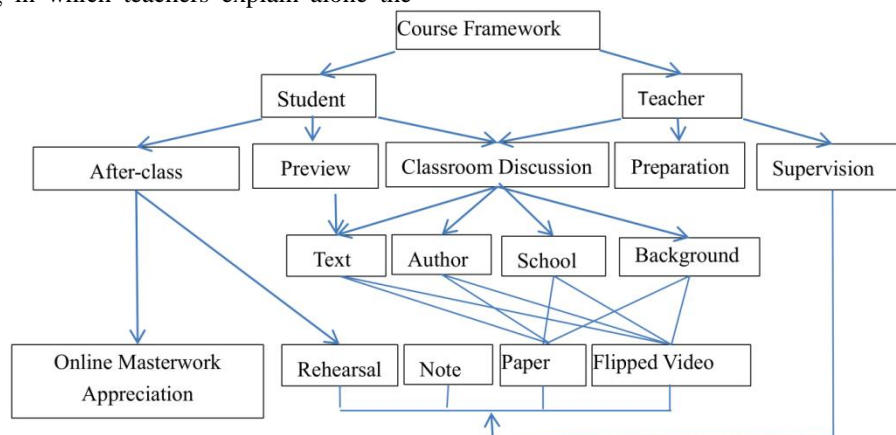


Fig. 1. Overall course framework.

### C. Cultivation of Students' Ability and Cooperative Consciousness in Course Structure

In literary works, the wisdom, emotion, experience, originality for composition, imagination, thoughts about life and life consciousness all play an irreplaceable role in the cultivation of students' capability of critical thinking, aesthetic and scientific literacy, which is an important embodiment of the cultivation of their humanistic literacy in the teaching process of British and American literary works. Therefore, in the process of learning the course, teachers explore how to make students not only learn literature

knowledge, but also master the methods of acquiring knowledge, combined with teaching tasks, to complete the assignment of text reading, reflection, network-assisted learning and term papers in their own way, to exercise their language skills, reading and writing skills. In the form of group/team structure, students can accomplish the tasks of classroom discussion, flipped courseware and rehearsal repertoire through cooperation and arbitrary combination, so as to cultivate their team consciousness and form critical thinking and appreciation ability gradually. Figure 2 shows the ability structure of student-centered, method-oriented, skill-oriented and team-oriented.

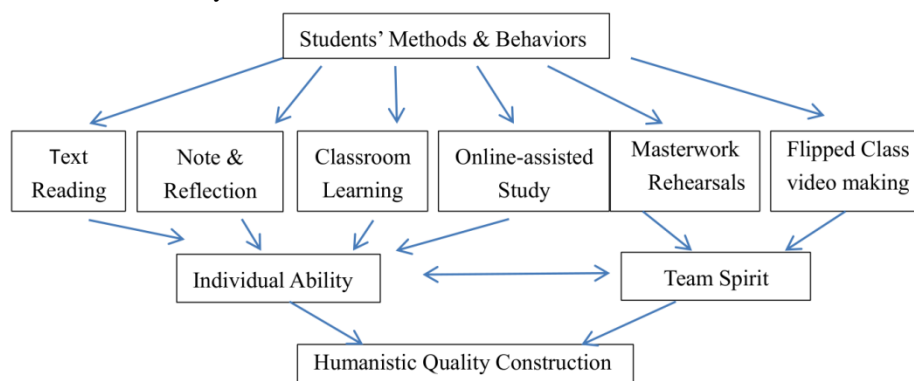


Fig. 2. Framework for methods and ability of learning.

#### D. Course Framework for the Purpose of Cultivation and Improvement of Humanistic Literacy

Cultivating college students' humanistic literacy is an important part of college education. Humanistic literacy is expressed through humanistic culture they learned. Literature, as an excellent resource of culture and a spiritual treasure trove shared by the world, is an effective carrier of human cultural dissemination. Literary works have become the reflection of cultural factors in national, social, political and economic development, life philosophy and other aspects. Anglo-American literature course bears the outstanding knowledge of humanities and history in the world. Students learn excellent historical knowledge from literary works, learn to develop human civilization further and make it a rise for human history to a higher level. Literary creation stems from real life to a great extent, literary works are the reflection of human consciousness in the real world, usually relying on various elements in the real world for predictive creation, but literary works exceed real life. Based on this trait, literary works can reflect the real social life more profoundly; writers pursue the ideal society of the times with the help of literary creation. Through reading and analyzing English and American literary works, students can improve

their foreign language proficiency, improve their ability to appreciate literary and artistic works, understand the spiritual pursuits of people under various living conditions in different times, and learn to appreciate the national culture and the development process of the country. Teachers try to apply philosophical knowledge in literary works to guide students to correctly cope with the dialectical relations between people and society in real life and apply the religious knowledge and positive moral concepts to guide students to establish correct values and outlook on life, so that students can behave well in faith. The key of humanistic education lies in the education of human nature, which can provide something that can be transformed into students' soul. Truth, goodness and beauty are the core values promoted by excellent British and American literary works, which is conducive to the healthy development of students' body and mind. By appreciating excellent literary works, students can learn the excellent qualities of great figures in their works and purify their souls, thus promoting the formation of the great qualities such as sense of responsibility, spirit of struggle, courage and firmness. They can learn to master and regulate personal emotions, endure difficulties and interpersonal skills, improve appreciation, and form ways of critical thinking ("Fig. 3").

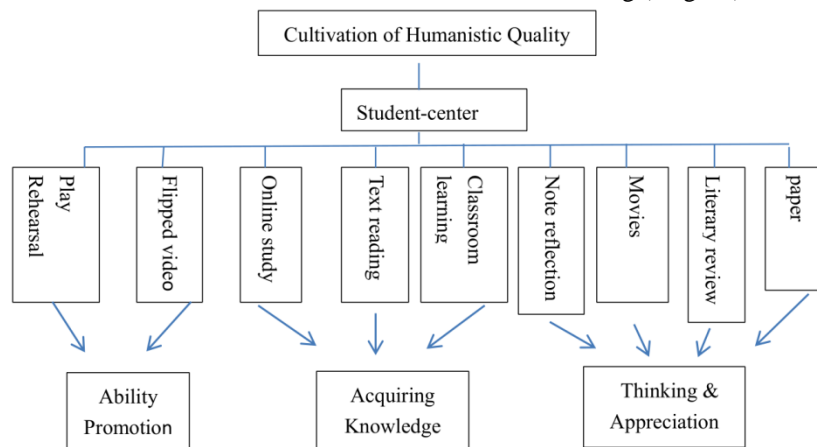


Fig. 3. Course framework for cultivation of humanistic quality.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Under the guidance of the goal of cultivating students' humanistic accomplishments, the task framework for teaching and learning of British and American literature course, which embodies the characteristics of humanities, is more than that of "student-centered", for the expansion of knowledge, cultivation of the cooperation ability of individuals and groups, formation of rational thinking and critical appreciation. It is to lay a good foundation for students to understand the society, and correctly deal with all kinds of difficulties around them.

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