

# Teaching Objectives and Strategies of Greek and Roman Mythology for College Students\*

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**Abstract**—Greek and Roman mythology has a tremendous impact on the development of Western society and culture. Through the study of Greek and Roman mythology, students can not only learn vocabulary and cultural knowledge, but also learn about Western literature, art, history and other related knowledge. This paper discusses the teaching strategies of Greek and Roman mythology course from four aspects: pre-class preparation, classroom practice, homework assignment and course evaluation to promote students' language ability, cultural awareness, literary appreciation ability, artistic aesthetic ability and learning ability.

**Keywords**—Greek and Roman mythology course; college English teaching; improvement

## I. INTRODUCTION

The College English course is not only a language course, but also a quality education course that enriches students' knowledge and understandings of world culture. Therefore, the design of college English courses should fully consider the cultivation of students' cultural quality and the transformation of international cultural knowledge to students. During the courses, teachers need to utilize English as much as possible in the classroom to let students understand science and technology, Western social culture and other knowledge.

Ancient Greece was the source of development of Western civilization. After the Hippo War in the 5th-6th centuries BC, the ancient Greek economy reached a new height, providing a good historical environment for the splendid development of ancient Greek culture. Under the influence of Roman culture, Western culture has also developed well. The influence of Greek and Roman mythology on Western society is enormous from the perspective of today's social development. For example, English's formation and development are closely related to Greek and Roman mythology. Greek and Roman mythology course is a general education course for students in non-

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English majors. During this course, students can not only learn Western languages, vocabulary knowledge, but also learn more about Western literature, art and history. Through this course, students could expand their knowledge and understand better about international cultural. In this article, the author will firstly explore how to improve students' language ability, cultural awareness, literary appreciation level, artistic aesthetic ability and learning ability in the Greek and Roman mythology course. Then the author will explore new teaching strategies to effectively enhance the teaching quality of Greek and Roman mythology course.

## II. TEACHING OBJECTIVES

### A. Improvement of Students' Language Ability

Language ability mainly refers to the ability of understanding and expressing of language in social context. Language ability is the "hard core" in the core literacy of English subjects. That is, the ability to express the ideas in spoken and written English, the ability to understand various English texts, and the ability to use linguistic knowledge [1]. From a practical situation, the impact of Greek and Roman mythology generated mainly on English words and everyday English communication. After a long period of development, English has been very flexible. In practical applications, it also uses metaphors and anthropomorphism to make the language more vivid and vivid. Affected by Greek and Roman mythology, some mythological words have become part of the current daily expression of English. As an important part of English culture, Greek and Roman culture constantly integrates and absorbs English, forming some fixed and special words and phrases. In the process of English learning, a large number of new words hinder the improvement of language level of college students. And vocabulary has gradually become one of the key and difficult points to improve college students' English ability. Without knowing the source of vocabulary and phrases, students have to remember the words and phrases in a stock way, which is not useful for a deep understanding of the English language. If students study the relationship between Greek and Roman mythology and English vocabulary from the perspective of etymology, they will understand the relationship between Greek and Roman mythology and English vocabulary. And

students will understand the vocabulary and cultural origin from Greek and Roman mythology.

#### *B. Improvement of Students' Cultural Awareness*

Cross-cultural understanding is an essential competency for students' development. The students' cultural awareness and ability should include evaluation, comparison and induction of English cultural traditions and phenomena of society culture so as to form their own cultural attitudes and enhance their cultural identification ability. Greek and Roman mythology is deeply rooted in the English and enriches the English language and culture. In the process of learning, students often encounter words and idioms originating from Greek and Roman mythology. Without the background culture of understanding Greek and Roman mythology, it is difficult to thoroughly understand the deep meanings in these linguistic forms, which makes it difficult to communicate and discuss deeply. In college English teaching, most of the emphasis is on language knowledge learning and language skills improvement which ignores the cultivation of cultural knowledge. Therefore, when teachers study the connotation of Greek and Roman vocabulary and its application in college English teaching, they can start with the phrases and idioms originating from Greek and Roman mythology, and take advantages of Greek and Roman mythology's beautiful historical allusions and rich cultural background to stimulate students' interest of learning English.

#### *C. Improvement of Students' Literary Appreciation Level*

The development of English literature is closely related to the Renaissance. In the 16th century, Renaissance prevailed in Europe and became a revolutionary means of integrating art, science and literature. From a literary point of view, the Renaissance can also be regarded as "the rebirth of words"[2]. During this period, literary writers re-examine ancient Greek and Latin works, and some passages were gradually circulated by people and imitated the works' writing style in literary creation. Greek and Roman mythology inspired English literary creation. Greek and Roman mythology is vivid, image, and easy to understand. It is widely spread in English-speaking countries. Many writers combine mythological stories with creative subjects in their creations to show the corresponding literary tendencies. The romantic genre works in English literature were created on the basis of Greek mythology. Greek and Roman mythology is beautiful and touching. It is deeply loved by Western poets and writers, which greatly inspired their creative inspiration. Greek and Roman mythology participated in the construction of the early human mindset and the way of understanding the world. It became a deep source of consciousness after thousands of years of prototyping. It became the source of the writers' poetry creation and the fertile ground for the growth of Western literature. From ancient times to the present, the shadows of ancient Greek and Roman mythology in Western literary works can be seen everywhere. It has a huge influence to fully understand Western literary works. While explaining the mythological stories, teachers could read and analyze the classic literary works to help students to understand the connotation of literary classics and

feel the depth of the works and artistic charm in order to gain a full aesthetic experience, and improve the literary works.

#### *D. Improvement of Students' Artistic Aesthetic Ability*

The influence of Greek and Roman mythology on Western culture is not limited in the field of literature. In terms of art, paintings and sculptures based on Greek mythology are numerous [3]. Works created with mythological themes during the Renaissance have become a valuable asset of immortal masterpieces and human culture. In the teaching process, teachers can make full use of paintings and sculptures to improve students' artistic aesthetic ability. While reading the stories, teachers could present relevant world famous paintings and sculptures in the courseware, and lead the students to enter the Western art galleries to enjoy the charm of art works. The collections of ancient Greek and Roman mythology in different historical periods are spread across museums in various Western countries. The mythical story accompanied by explanations of art treasures enable students to fully understand the beauty brought by life.

#### *E. Improvement of Students' Learning Ability*

Learning ability refers to students' awareness of active participation in language practice under the guidance of clear learning objectives in order to develop good study habits and the ability to develop effective English learning strategies. In the teaching of Greek and Roman mythology courses in colleges, cultivating students' learning ability can stimulate their English learning motivation, improve their English learning autonomy, and ultimately improve the English learning effect.

### III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

#### *A. Preparation for the Course*

Greek and Roman mythology courses have many contents, and the relationship between gods and heroes is complex. The story is quite complicated, but the course time is limited [4]. Therefore, teachers should provide students with relevant videos, bibliographies and websites on the digital learning platform to let students preview the teaching materials in advance. Before the class, the teacher publishes the learning content on the learning platform and provides links to relevant resources to let the students preview the learning content to prepare for the active participation in the discussion. Teachers should select reading materials about Greek and Roman mythology for students and systematically introduce the knowledge system of mythology. Teachers could provide some mythical stories that are moderately difficult, representative and interesting as extracurricular reading assignments to students. And teachers need to introduce the allusions and idioms in the reading passage to deepen students' understanding of English-related words, related phrases in the English and get better understand about the content of the material used in the lecture.

### *B. Conducting Practice in the Class*

First, teachers could organize discussions on the content of the course before the class, answer the problems of students encountering during their learning process and dynamically adjust the teaching progress and content according to students' understanding of the content. Secondly, teachers could assign the tasks of telling stories of some gods and heroes in Greek and Roman mythology in order to cultivate students' learning and expression ability. Students can get guidance from teachers at any time during the preparation process. The teacher's main task is to design thinking activities and carry out heuristic questions in the course to stimulate students' analytical thinking and internalize their knowledge. In this way, the teacher becomes an instructor of learner and the students become an active researcher and innovator.

### *C. Arranging Homework After Class*

Because the time of college English course is limited, it is better to arrange homework assignments of Greek and Roman mythology course to students in order to help them get more familiar with the learning content. Teachers could let students appreciate some related movies and ask students to make some comments about the movie and write down the new words in the movie. By this way, students could have a fundamental understanding of the cultural origins of these vocabularies, improve their interest in learning English and use relevant expressions in appropriate contexts. Students' ability of expressing in English could be improved in the process of writing comments of film which is an effective complement to the college English course.

### *D. Conducting Course Evaluation*

This course provides effective feedback to students through formative assessment. The formative assessment is based on teachers' evaluation and students' evaluation are rated as a reference. The evaluation is conducted in four dimensions: student language ability, learning ability, thinking quality and cultural awareness. Each part constitutes a quarter of the total score. The language ability of students is mainly measured in terms of its pitch, accuracy and logic expressed in English, and understanding of audio-visual material or textual. The learning ability assessment includes the students' preparation before class, the attendance of the class, the quality and innovation of the individual or group presentation project and the innovative learning ability after class. The examination of the quality of thinking focuses on whether students form their own unique thinking and viewpoints, especially the innovative thinking through judgment, induction and debate in the class. Cultural awareness test considers students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures in the context of respecting and recognizing cultural differences.

## IV. CONCLUSION

As a multi-disciplinary language course, Greek and Roman mythology course can effectively improve students' language ability, cultural awareness, literary appreciation ability, artistic aesthetic ability and learning ability. The

teaching strategy of Greek and Roman mythology course needs to be adjusted the teaching process in four aspects: pre-class preparation, classroom practice, after-school homework and course evaluation so as to promote students' language, consciousness, thinking ability and learning ability to be comprehensively improved in the process of course learning.

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