

Constructivist Study of English Movie Appreciation and English Culture Cognition

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Abstract: Culture is deeply linked with language. During the process of foreign language teaching, cultural cognition has positive impacts on language learning. English movies are important carriers of English language and culture. The understanding of knowledge and customs of English countries, which obtained through movie appreciation, significantly improves English learning and teaching performance. In this study, positive effects of English movie appreciation on English teaching are explored on the base of constructivism analysis. Moreover, the construction of English culture cognition through movie appreciation is also studied for better English teaching achievements.

1 INTRODUCTION

Culture, a quintessence of human history, has close relationship to language. Construction of English culture cognition has great importance to English learning. English movies provide an environment in which students are able to experience and perceive deeply English culture and then language. Activities related to English movies (group discussion, tasks etc.), as an ideal method of English teaching, enhance effectively students' ability of listening, reading, writing and translating (L. N. Wu, T. H. Xiao, 2012). Meanwhile, English movies are also a platform in which English teaching can be practiced in a more flexible and interesting way. Therefore, students are motivated into active and fruitful English learning practice.

2 CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

Teaching process is emphasized in constructivism theory. New cognition is developed from the combination of knowledge and learners' consciousness through the relationship and interaction between knowledge and outside world. This new cognition is thoughtful and creative. There are four elements of the constructivism theory in teaching: context, cooperation, social activity and meaning construction. Context is set to improve the cooperation among learners (N. Wu, 2012). Social

activities are also encouraged, during which learners think over the learning process and knowledge to develop a new cognition. Establishment of context is an important part of teaching. English movies are rich sources for context establishment. Sound, images and scenes of English movies lead students into a context of English language and culture to have profound understandings. In order to have all students involved in teaching process, questions and topics are designed and selected based on teaching targets and contexts. Therefore, students are able to experience English language and culture to enhance their English ability and the knowledge of English culture.

Knowledge construction is a complicated process, requiring the combination and expression of knowledge and learners' consciousness. During the process of English movie appreciation, students need to fully understand constructivism theory to grasp the major contents and construct the cognition of English culture. For instance, students are supposed to collect related materials, analyze teaching context and put forward hypotheses before class (X. Y. Hu, 2011). They are then sharing the materials and thoughts with group members during class. By doing this, students discuss their hypotheses and analyze comprehensively the teaching context. The teaching process is then completed after the evaluation of teaching. Cooperation is crucial in English learning practice. Students should take the construction of knowledge as a collective, thoughtful and creative process. Group members discuss and share their

opinions together to fulfill their tasks. In addition to grasp knowledge, they also explore regulations and connections among the knowledge they obtained. Hence, knowledge taught in class, as a target of analysis, is more classified for students to construct their own knowledge. In this process, students organize, analyze, discuss and summarize autonomously. The tasks of teachers are to inspire, help and guide learners to complete learning process of analysis, discussion and summarization. Students can master knowledge better, open their minds and enrich their class in this process to obtain more achievements.

3 ENGLISH MOVIES AND CULTURE

Language, as a carrier of culture, is also a part of national culture. Movies represent comprehensively cultural background of a nationality. English movies are compounds generated from English culture. Cultural backgrounds such as geography, history, politics, society, economy and education can be vividly perceived through movie appreciation, so as to the charm of English language. On one hand, students are more interested in English learning because of cultural factors. They take part into the English teaching autonomously to think and innovate language-learning practice. On the other hand, as language is planted into culture, students obtained knowledge unconsciously. It not only enhances English learning, but also improves students' understanding of English knowledge and culture.

4 APPRECIATION AND ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH MOVIES

Movie is a processed and extracted form of real society and life. Cultures, historical backgrounds and social surroundings of English-language countries are vividly demonstrated through artistic means of movies. Benefiting from abundant cultural resources, movies can be brilliant and attractive. The first important thing when appreciate and analyze movies is selecting movies with appropriate complexity. A proper movie provides students with audio and visual pleasures. If the movie is too easy, English teaching can be quite boring and unlikely to

attract students' attention. If the movie is too hard for students to understand, students can hardly benefit for their English learning, except some visual experience.

There are two things to notice when selecting a movie with proper difficulty level. On one hand, situations of students' English learning should be known precisely. Topic for group discussion should be chosen according to students' abilities to help students to cultivate cognition of English culture, as well as the language. For example, new students, usually with poor English ability, need relatively easy movies to start, such as *The Lion King*, *Frozen* and *How to Train Your Dragon*. On the other hand, movies selected should have classic and epochal features. Some classic movies such as *The Sound of Music*, *Forrest Gump* and *Titanic* are ideal materials for English movie appreciation.

Firstly, these movies are important in English language teaching for quite a long time. Relatively mature teaching patterns around the movies have been developed during teaching practices, which is easy to be handled. Secondly, experiences of teaching those movies help teachers to control teaching process and guide the participation of students to feel English culture and language. Those movies, including *Frozen*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Turbo* and *Last Stand*, are a part English movie fashion and very influential. Appreciation of those movies on the base of teaching scheme is very useful for students to learn the language and culture. Thirdly, the modern artistic methods employed in those movies are attractive for students, so as to stimulate the motivation of students to learn English language. Fourth, charm of English language is well demonstrated through the dialogue, music and other aspects of those movies. Students can appreciate deeply the beauty of English culture and gradually construct cognition of English culture. Therefore, students' comprehensive English abilities are improved accordingly.

Furthermore, literature feature is also to be taken into consideration when selecting a movie. Connecting movie appreciation to literature is a method to stimulate students' interest in English literature. Students' English abilities can be enhanced by reading literature works. Movies like *Forrest Gump* and *The Bridge of Madison County* are effective in attract students' attention to related books. Besides, movies selected should with various themes. For example, *Forrest Gump* is about the growth of a specific disadvantaged person, encouraging students to advance. *How to Train Your Dragon* attracts audiences with its fancy science

fiction world. Students fall into the specific atmosphere of the movie and start English study autonomously. Frozen touches the souls of audiences by its beautiful dance, music and scenes. Students feel sentiments among families, loves and friends, which cultivates desires to study English language and culture. The strong desire of cognition for English culture helps learners to enhance their abilities to feel and understand English culture. In summarize, various types of English movies make movie appreciation more meaningful and thoughtful. Students obtain more understandings and knowledge during appreciation process. Their abilities of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating are improved accordingly. Lastly, students' abilities of movie appreciation should be cultivated and strengthened. Widely use of English movie in education arena helps students obtain more knowledge during the movie appreciation process.

5 CONSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH CULTURAL COGNITION

English movie appreciation has great influence on English teaching and the construction of English culture and knowledge. There are several things should be mentioned. First, it is important for teachers to carefully select movies and design contexts. Multi-media teaching cannot completely take the place of the communication between teachers and students in class. If the movies played in class are not carefully selected, most class time will be occupied by, instead of movie appreciation and analysis, aimless movie watching. Teaching aims can be achieved when movies are played on purpose and students put forward questions and discuss with each other based on materials they collected. For instance, in Frozen, when Anna was young, she was accidentally injured by her sister's magic. Her sister eludes Anna after she recovered to avoid hurting her. Anna was very lonely without the company of her sister. Plots and music of this section can easily arouse the enthusiasm of students to learn English language. At the end of the movie, Anna stands up bravely, regardless all the dangers, to protect her sister. Love removes the curse at last. Questions are developed from those movie sections. Teachers then encourage students to discuss with group members to fulfill tasks.

Second, preparing work before class should be emphasized. Teachers present several questions to students to arouse their English learning desires. Those questions are related to selected movies and

teaching contents. Students are required to extensively understand selected movies, character features and story backgrounds through various approaches. Moreover, teachers summarize vocabularies and grammars used in movie materials to guide students to study before and after class. Therefore, students are able to combine English knowledge and movies, and then obtain and use such knowledge during the process of movie appreciation. The third point is that attention should be paid dialogue analysis and classic sentences. Examples can be extracted from Forrest Gump: "Mama says, 'Stupid is as stupid does'" and "Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get." Taking notes of classic sentences enhances students' skills to learn English language and appreciate movies. English movie appreciation and language teaching then interact each other positively. Fourth, teachers organize after-class activities properly. For example, role-play of some sections of a movie provide students an opportunity to experience in person the charm of English language and culture, and also the use of English language in movies. Another activity is asking students to think over questions deliberately presented according to the movies. In Frozen, Anna needs a kiss of true love to remove the curse. The question "What is true love" is then put forwarded for students to discuss. Inner feelings of students are aroused into the process of English culture learning. Thus, students' feeling, understanding and cognition of English culture are enhanced.

6 CONCLUSION

Construction of English cultural cognition requires a long and vast learning process. English movies provide English learners with a platform to understand vividly and profoundly English culture. During the process of movie appreciation, students experience and feel deeply English culture. Therefore, learners are capable to perceive connotations of English culture by watching movies. In light of constructivism theory, learners realize the construction of cognition of English culture through perceiving, analyzing, understanding and experiencing process. They can also enhance their ability of English language and comprehensive abilities simultaneously.

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