Enhancing Artistic Creativity through Heuristic Teaching Methods

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Abstract: The essence of education is to cultivate individuals who are useful. The "people" being educated are the students, and teaching and learning are the essential components of the teaching process. There is also a positive interactive relationship between teachers and students, as well as among multiple parties. Heuristic teaching is a beneficial method and means to stimulate students' initiative during the teaching process. Currently, in the teaching of artistic language expression in Chinese universities' drama performance majors, the positioning of the major is often vague, and there is a significant issue of homogenization. Under this teaching philosophy, most students trained tend to have a high degree of homogeneity and lack the ability to cultivate independent personalities and characteristics in graduates. This study will use a literature review approach to compare traditional teaching methods and heuristic teaching methods. It has been found that the shortcomings of traditional teaching lie in an excessive emphasis on the teacher as the main actor, with a sole focus on knowledge transfer, neglecting the students' own creative thinking, and even limiting their creativity. When heuristic teaching is applied, the classroom becomes a place where teachers and students actively participate in and complete the teaching and learning activities together. It gives the initiative of "teaching and learning" back to the students. The teacher's role shifts from injecting knowledge to encouraging students to think and innovate actively, ultimately achieving artistic language expression where "a hundred people have different voices, a thousand people have different faces," rather than "a thousand people have the same face, ten thousand people have the same voice."

Keywords: Heuristic Teaching; Artistic Language; Implicit Messages; Teacher-Student Interaction; Artistic Creativity

1. Introduction

The essence of education is to nurture individuals, to cultivate useful individuals. The "individuals" being educated are students, and teaching and learning are the core issues in the educational process. Simultaneously, there exists a positive interactive relationship between teachers and students, as well as among multiple parties. Heuristic teaching is an advantageous method and means to stimulate students' enthusiasm during the teaching process (Huang, 2006). Starting from the concept of educational reform, heuristic teaching methods fully leverage the leadership role of teachers and the active role of students. In this process, teachers engage in teaching, while students engage in learning. Currently, many courses offered by art colleges are practical, with the ultimate goal of nurturing students' practical abilities. The researchers believe that classroom teacher-student interaction should include teacher demonstrations, student practice, individual teacher guidance, and extracurricular communication, among other elements. The effectiveness of teacher-student interaction is a crucial factor in determining the success of classroom teaching. This chapter first provides an explanation of the background and motivation of heuristic teaching research, which then leads to the ultimate purpose of this study.

1.1 Background and Motivation

In the teaching of artistic language expression in Chinese universities' drama performance majors, the positioning of the major is often vague, and there is a significant issue of homogenization, mainly focusing on elite talent development as the fundamental approach to professional education. Under this teaching philosophy, most students trained tend to exhibit a high degree of homogeneity and cannot develop into graduates with independent personalities and characteristics (Ding, 2015). However, heuristic teaching should not be simplistically regarded as just a teaching method; it is a teaching model that involves a series of teaching inspirations and assists students in
developing open-minded thinking to "draw inferences about other cases."

Chinese drama schools have continued to adhere to the "experiential" theater theory of outstanding German-Soviet theater master Stanislavski since the 1950s, emphasizing the principles of realism and advocating that actors should immerse themselves in the emotions of their characters (Chen, 2002). In actual teaching, due to the influence of the traditional "master-apprentice" teaching model in China and the students' passive learning mode (lacking active thinking and creative thinking), many institutions still follow the initial practice of "teacher-led" teaching, with classrooms often adopting procedural training models where teachers demonstrate and students imitate. This approach inadvertently suppresses students' imagination and creativity, particularly in shaping diverse characters.

To assess the artistic creativity of actors or stage artists in their expression of theatrical language, we often use the benchmark of "a hundred people have different voices, a thousand people have different faces." Even the tone of voice for different characters should be distinct. As educators in the field of art, we should focus on inspiring and vigorously nurturing students' imagination and creativity. The goal is to enable them to create a variety of distinct character images, rather than having "a thousand people have the same face, ten thousand people have the same voice."

1.2 Research Objectives

Heuristic teaching stands in contrast to injective teaching, where students are often perceived as containers, and teachers merely inject knowledge into these containers to fulfill their tasks (Luo, 2007). This approach, which views individuals as containers rather than emotional and thinking beings, emphasizes the "teaching" component, thus neglecting the expansion of students' thinking and creativity. The researcher believes that a good learning method involves students fully experiencing and creating during the learning process. Heuristic teaching empowers teachers to give students the initiative through various teaching methods, shifting the role of teachers from knowledge injection to fostering students' active thinking and adaptability. Zhang. (2015) noted that there are various ways education can influence students' creativity, with the general consensus being a focus on whether students have the opportunity to practice creative thinking and behavior. "Teachers should actively interact with students and develop together during the teaching process" (Xie, 2010). Wu (2017) mentioned that "teacher-student interaction" is a focal point and challenge in the practice of classroom teaching reform. Jiang (2008) also pointed out that creatively solving problems in students' learning processes would bring substantial benefits to society, highlighting the importance of nurturing students' creativity.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Object

This study involves tracking and summarizing the teaching period of the course "Fundamentals of Artistic Language Expression" for 15 students in a first-year class at the Performance Department of Sichuan Film and Television College, where the researcher is employed. The reason for selecting first-year students as research subjects is that their first-year curriculum primarily focuses on training in the fundamentals of artistic language expression. The course content leans toward the analysis, understanding, and development of imagination related to literary and artistic works.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Most existing research primarily cites literature related to the application of heuristic teaching in general education courses, with limited exploration of the theoretical explanation of the connection between heuristic teaching and creativity within specific artistic courses. This study relies on the theoretical support of German educator J.F. Herbart's heuristic teaching method to elucidate the relationship between heuristic teaching and creativity in the context of artistic language expression practice.

2.3 Research Methods

This study employs document analysis, action research, and observation as research methods.

Document analysis: This method involves collecting, organizing, and summarizing existing literature and documents. It entails analyzing and studying the curriculum offerings at the target institution in comparison to program plans, syllabi, and professional visions developed by other institutions.

Action research: The researcher will engage in action research within their real teaching environment. They will implement specific teaching procedures, using a combination of effective research methods and
professional techniques, to address and explore relevant educational issues through practical actions.

Observation: Through observation of the research subjects during the training period, the study will assess the advantages and limitations of using heuristic teaching methods in the classroom. Additionally, it will document any relevant changes observed in the research subjects. These observations will be organized, compared, and analyzed in conjunction with practical classroom teaching experiences. Ultimately, the study aims to summarize the impact of heuristic teaching on creativity and perform related comparative analyses.

3. Exploration of Heuristic Teaching, Teacher-Student Interaction, and Artistic Creativity

3.1 The Essence of Heuristic Teaching

Heuristic teaching refers to the use of various teaching methods, guided by the objectives, content, students' knowledge levels, and knowledge patterns. It involves imparting knowledge through inspiration and guidance, aiming to cultivate students' abilities and promote active learning, fostering physical and mental development (Guo, 2010; Li, 2015; Xu, 2016). The ancient Chinese educator Confucius, a pioneer of heuristic teaching, proposed the teaching philosophy: "Do not admonish without anger; do not criticize without cause" (Peng & Li, 2008). For teachers, it involves harnessing students' intrinsic motivation through external influences (Shao, 1995; Yang, 2012).

In practical application, heuristic teaching involves guiding students to think critically, encouraging them to actively consider and explore problems rather than seeking standardized answers. Thus, heuristic teaching places a greater emphasis on developing students' abilities rather than conforming to strict problem-solving standards.

Heuristic teaching places relatively high demands on teachers, focusing on the design of questions rather than the typical classroom questioning. The design of questions should strike a balance between simplicity and difficulty, and the questions should possess inspiring or exploratory significance. The difficulty of questions should progressively increase in alignment with the teaching content, guiding students to gradually deepen their thinking about the issues. From the presentation of questions to the step-by-step progression of content, teachers must exhibit precise control, attracting students' attention while aligning with their thinking abilities, ultimately stimulating students' thoughts and encouraging them to explore and study problems until they find solutions.

3.2 The Essence of Teacher-Student Interaction

Teacher-student interaction refers to the mutual influence and interaction between teachers and students. The primary purpose of interaction is to achieve educational value and promote the comprehensive development of students (Xiong, 2009). Ye and Pang (2001) also emphasized that teacher-student interaction encompasses the subject of interaction, the foundations and conditions of interaction, the process of interaction, and the results of interaction.

In traditional classrooms, the relationship between teachers and students often leans toward one of authority and submission, with limited opportunities for equal communication. The researcher believes that interaction between teachers and students plays a vital role in fostering students' innovative thinking and creativity. As classroom designers, we should guide students to actively participate in the construction of knowledge. This promotes a balanced approach between teaching and learning.

3.3 The Essence of Artistic Creativity

Creativity refers to the ability to produce novel and valuable products, as judged by a group of individuals (Yi et al., 2011). A key component of creativity is divergent thinking, which involves generating novel and appropriate ideas (Sternberg & Lubart, 1996; Brown et al., 2007). Artistic creativity pertains to creative expressions in any aspect of art, including visual arts, music, literature, dance, drama, film, and mixed media (Yi et al., 2011).

3.4 The Relationship Between Heuristic Teaching and Artistic Creativity

Creative thinking is the core of creativity (Lin, 1986). Initially, heuristic teaching, which is student-centered and contrasts with injective teaching, was referred to as a scientific teaching method that fosters students' ability to analyze and solve problems, stimulate their enthusiasm for learning, and particularly inspire their creative thinking, all while preserving the prominent role of teachers in the teaching process.
3.5 The Relationship Between Teacher- Student Interaction and Creativity

First, it's essential to understand the meaning of the term "interaction," which denotes mutual influence or impact (Xiong, 2009). In the context of the teaching process, teacher-student interaction should be correctly understood as extending beyond verbal and physical responses; it encompasses interactions of thought, emotions, and spirit. Students also engage in interaction by actively listening and participating in dialogue. Interaction includes actions, brain usage, demonstrations, presentations, debates, and responses, all intertwined with thinking and analysis. "Teacher-student communication and mutual development" in education does not imply "teacher-student teaching and learning." Recognizing the importance of dialectical education, "teacher-student active interaction" is an essential manifestation and basic requirement of heuristic teaching, reflecting the teaching principle that combines teacher guidance with student initiative.

4. Strategies for Digital Marketing of Traditional Buyi Ethnic Clothing Enterprises in Guizhou

Language serves as a medium for reflecting objective reality and psychological behavior in human interactions. In daily life, language is the most essential tool for human communication, directly manifesting thoughts (Xia, 1994). However, in the realm of performing arts, artistic language draws from life but differs from it. In the field of performing arts, language is a crucial tool for actors to portray characters and a powerful means to captivate and engage the audience. Everyday language serves as a vessel for rational communication, while artistic language conveys emotional expression (Luo & Tai, 2007). The choice of language reflects the purpose, functions, and essence of human communication, revealing the speaker's verbal and psychological behavior.

Real-life experiences teach us that a character's truth may not necessarily align with their surface appearance; often, the truth lies hidden beneath the surface. Huang (2001) states, "The art of dialogue depends not only on the lines written but also on what is truly meant behind those lines." This requires artistic language practitioners to uncover the truth behind characters, employing techniques that go beyond the literary portrayal and delve into the realm of subtext.

Subtext refers to the hidden meaning behind spoken words or the "true intention to be expressed in a speech" (Yang, 2014). Guo et al. (2013) also argue that in stage performances, the expression of artistic language and the allure of subtext in stage actions are closely related. Using concise language to convey the rich subtext while accurately expressing it within the context is essential. Learning any form of knowledge has its unique characteristics and can start from sensory perception or theoretical understanding (Lin, 1986). Heuristic teaching, based on students' sensory cognition and incorporating theoretical knowledge, aims to stimulate students' imagination, foster visual thinking, and ultimately communicate through sound. For example, when explaining Mr. Guo Moruo's poem “The Street in the Sky," if we initially ask students, “The distant streetlights shine like countless stars. The stars in the sky appear like numerous streetlights. What is the meaning conveyed here?” Students might find the question vague and challenging to answer. However, when we provide historical context, the question becomes more meaningful, and students quickly understand the author's intentions.

Simultaneously, we should focus on guiding students' independent thinking, allowing them to understand knowledge comprehensively, both in terms of its essence and its underlying reasons. This approach ensures that when students grasp the stylistic undertones and character features of literary works, their interpretations are not shallow, and their emotional responses are genuine, creating believable character images. For example, the repetition of "I'm really foolish, truly foolish" by Xiang Lin's wife is due to her experiencing repeated heavy blows, resulting in emotional numbness. The phrase "Many it is, not many also" represents the distinct language of Kong Yiji, a fallen Confucian scholar. Since a character's language reflects their personality, crafting distinctive character language becomes one of the essential tools for shaping character images.

In classroom practice, how can teachers effectively employ heuristic teaching to stimulate students' artistic creativity in the context of "teacher-student active interaction"? Based on accumulated experience at the researcher's institution, the following insights are summarized:

(1) Elicit Active Learning and Generate Interest in the Course

Activate students’ intrinsic motivation for learning by shifting their attitude from "I have to learn"
to "I want to learn." This involves fostering a proactive learning attitude and cultivating genuine interest in the course.

(2) Guide Students Toward Active and Independent Thinking

Effectively guiding students to engage in active and independent thinking is at the core of heuristic teaching. Teachers should encourage students to proactively raise questions, think critically about issues, and independently seek solutions based on course content.

5. Teaching Design

Using the first-year foundational textbook "Selected Works of College Student Recitation and Classic Lines" with Guo Moruo's Romantic Poetry "The Street in the Sky" as a teaching case:

Question and Answer Style Heuristic:

(1) What information does "distant streetlights shine" convey?
- It indicates that it's nighttime, and the streetlights are just coming on, creating a sense of evening.

(2) How does the author describe the street market and the items on the street market? What does he want to convey?
- The author portrays the bustling scene of the heavenly street market by using imagination that is inspired by the realities of the earthly life. He aims to convey the idea that life should be prosperous and abundant.

(3) Through the description of the lives of the Cowherd and Weaver Girl in the heavens, what message does the author want to express?
- The author, through describing the lives of the Cowherd and Weaver Girl, imagines that they have obtained a life of freedom, where they can ride oxen and cross the Milky Way freely. When night falls, they carry lanterns and leisurely stroll through the heavenly streets, living a happy and fulfilling life. This expresses the author's pursuit of a bright, happy life, and a desire for freedom and democracy.

Associative and Imaginative Heuristic:

(1) Associative Heuristic:
- (Realistic) Streetlights (Bright) — Stars (Twinkle)
- Stars (Appear) — Streetlights (Light Up)

(2) Imaginative Heuristic:
- Street Market (Beautiful) — Items (Exquisite)
- Milky Way (Wide) — Cowherd and Weaver Girl (Free Movement)
- Shooting Star (Lantern) — Cowherd and Weaver Girl (Leisurely Stroll)

Effective classroom interaction and heuristic teaching also impose strict requirements on educators' language expression. These are summarized as follows:

(1) Accuracy of Language
In teaching, whether it's pre-class reviews, introductions to the current lesson, or summarizations within the class, language expressions must be accurate.

(2) Effectiveness of Language
At times, educators may feel that there's not enough time in the classroom. In reality, one of the main reasons is the excessive use of unnecessary language. Therefore, it's crucial to emphasize concise and effective language during the teaching process. The effectiveness of a lesson lies in whether it's efficient; if it lacks efficiency, even if the classroom atmosphere is lively, it's not worthy of promotion.

(3) Maintaining a Well-Paced Teaching Rhythm
In teaching, maintaining the pace of the lesson is also essential. A too-fast pace may make students feel anxious and fatigued, making it difficult for them to grasp the key points. Conversely, a too-slow pace may cause students to lose concentration and become mentally relaxed. Therefore, achieving a good teaching rhythm is necessary for achieving a positive teaching effect.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

Through the comparative study of traditional teaching methods and heuristic teaching, the following conclusions have been drawn:

The drawbacks of traditional teaching methods lie in the excessive emphasis on the teacher as the sole source of knowledge. The one-sided approach of knowledge transmission merely accomplishes the task of "teaching" and neglects students' own creative thinking. In some cases, it even restricts students' creativity. The adoption of heuristic teaching can significantly enhance students' divergent thinking and imaginative thinking, thus effectively improving their artistic creativity.

After implementing heuristic teaching, the classroom becomes a place where both teachers and educators can effectively interact with each other, fostering a learning attitude that is proactive and genuinely interested in the course.
students actively participate in and complete teaching activities. Effective communication and interaction between teachers and students take place through the delivery and reception of knowledge, as well as the raising and answering of questions. Through teaching by inspiration, teachers guide students in exploring the subtext in dramatic art language expression, such as lines, bringing them closer to the characters and deeply experiencing the soul of the script. This process transforms knowledge acquisition from sensory recognition to rational understanding and ultimately to the practical artistic creation process.

6.2 Implications

Through the compilation of literature and the summary of previous teaching cases, this researcher has found that creativity is often the key to problem-solving in many fields. Regardless of the industry, "creativity" is a core competency that should be possessed. Heuristic teaching, as a scientific teaching method for stimulating creativity, is not limited to teaching and learning in the classroom alone. It can also serve as a means to foster innovative thinking and core creativity in various industries. It is hoped that future researchers will consider this as a research direction and conduct in-depth studies and promotion beyond the classroom teaching context.

In summary, effective teaching can only be achieved by using appropriate classroom heuristics based on the actual situation of classroom teaching.

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