Strategy Exploration on Classical Poetry Situational Teaching

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Abstract. Classical poetry has instructive function, which can edify the temperament, moisten the soul and improve cultural literacy. Taking classical poetry teaching as a breakthrough point, the article explores the problems in the course of teaching. Based on the document research, it defines the connotation of Chinese situational teaching. Guided by Constructivism and Reception Aesthetics and being aimed at the cognitive law of middle school students, the writer researches practical teaching strategies in order to optimize the teaching process and enhance the teaching effect.

The Necessity of Classical Poetry Situational Teaching

Classical poetry is like a bright pearl in literary treasure house in China. It has a long history and rich cultural connotation. The classical poems selected for the Chinese teaching material present the context of development history of classical poetry, which is about the life of labor, the raising of heroes, the feeling of patriotism, pastoral description, saying farewell to friends, expressing political aspirations, frontier fortress brigade, homesickness of a man away from hometown, elucidating philosophy, reminiscence of history, laments of love and so on. Confucius, an ancient educator in China, highly praised the educating function of classical poetry. A poem can foster associative ability, improve discernment, teach social skills and satirical approach. With this principle, a man can not only serve parents near to him but the king or emperor far from him. It also teaches the names of birds and beasts and plants [1]. The poems selected for the teaching materials are of high quality and great beauty, carrying the contents of truth, goodness and beauty and with ideological, literary and artistic characters. Appreciating poems can edify the temperament, moisten the soul and improve cultural literacy.

In the course of Chinese teaching, appreciating classical poetry is the most difficult subject, which the students are not interested in. The most embarrassing thing is that no matter how hard the teacher tries to rouse their emotion, the students still feel ungrateful. The students just recite the poems, but they cannot understand the rich connotation of the classical poems, cannot feel the beautiful artistic conception and learn the poets’ emotions expressed in them. How do the teachers make a change for this embarrassing situation in order to make classical poetry learning interesting and effective? It is difficult for the teachers to use traditional teaching mode for tapping the students’ potential. With years of teaching experience, my opinion is that for teaching classical poetry, situational teaching mode can optimize the teaching process and enhance the teaching effect.

The Origin of Situational Teaching

It was in the ancient times in Chinese history that situational teaching was firstly used. “The mother of Mencius cuts the woven cloth for teaching her son” is a typical example of situational teaching. The mother of Mencius has educational art which is superb. She created a situation of “cutting the woven cloth” to make young Mencius realize the result of neglecting study and to encourage him to study hard, which had a very good educational effect.

In the education history of the western countries, there are also many records on situational teaching. Socrates, the educator of ancient Greek, used “Socratic Method,” which is a typical
situational approach. He asked the students to find out the truth from the questions asked by the teacher continuously in order to make them think actively and then correct themselves for the final truth. Rousseau, the enlightenment thinker and educator of France consciously used “forest” to create teaching situation to lead the students to learn about botanical knowledge and to train their ability for using the knowledge. George Lozanov, the medicine doctor and psychologist from Bulgaria, combined creating teaching situation with influencing emotion in his English class. He adopted the methods of playing music, directing students to act, arranging students to play games and so on to inspire their interest of learning English. The students mastered 1,800 English words within one month.

In China the earliest one who promoted situational teaching concept in Chinese education is Li Jilin, a special-grade teacher in primary Chinese teaching. For five years, she collected and sorted out materials and wrote a book “Li Jilin Anthology (Volume 1): Experiment and Research on Situational Teaching,” which is the first works on situational teaching theory research in China. In this book situational teaching theory and operation system were comprehensively explained. Teacher Li paid a great attention to cultivate the students’ learning interest and combined the emotional activities with cognitional activities.

The Conception of Situational Teaching

In “Modern Chinese Dictionary,” “situation” is defined as a “scene or situation,” which refers to a specific situation or scene [2]. In psychology “situation” means the environmental condition in which something happens and influences the organism behavior [3]. In pedagogy “situation” means the natural environment and social environment that concretely exist. It also means the psychological situation which has effect on people [4]. All the three conceptions put the “emotional situation” and “environmental situation” together. In Chinese teaching, “emotional situation” is understood as an optimized environment for Chinese teaching activity. Li Jiling, the first person who used situational teaching thinks that situational teaching starts from the dialectical relationship of “feelings and circumstances,” “feelings and expressions,” “feelings and reasons” and “feelings and overall development,” creating typical scene, inspiring the learners’ passion and combining the students’ emotional activities with cognitional activities to set up a teaching mode [5].

Chinese situational teaching is a kind of teaching mode for the teachers to start from teaching, focus on teaching activities, fully excavate different high-quality teaching and learning resources, create the atmosphere or scene suitable for teaching content, inspire the students’ interest, make the students actively join in the teaching activity to get knowledge and ability. In the situational teaching mode applied in classical poetry teaching, the teaching content and the situation either real or virtual are well combined, making the content more three-dimensional, inspiring and guiding the students from different aspects and angles, arousing their emotional experiences and helping them construct knowledge and ability so that the teaching process can be optimized and the teaching effect can be enhanced.

The Theoretical Basis of Situational Teaching

Constructivism Theory

Situational teaching mode is trace back to constructivism teaching theory. According to constructivism, knowledge is not gained from teaching. It is gained through a method named meaning construction after the learners make use of learning materials and with the help of others in a certain situation and the social cultural background [6]. This theory emphasizes that the students form the subject of cognition while the teacher plays a part of leading in the teaching activity. In the course of teaching, the teachers may use the pictures, films, leading questions, games, practical activities and so on to create a situation related to the teaching content so as to inspire the students’ interest, lead them to actively explore and solve problems and finally enhance the learning effect of classical poetry.
Theory of Reception Aesthetics

In the Theory of Reception Aesthetics, the educational and entertainment functions of literary works are realized by the readers and this process is the one in which the works gain vitality and was finally completed. According to the Theory of Reception Aesthetics, literacy activity is not the author’s own activity but the overall flow process constructed by the readers, the author and the whole world. Classical poetry is different from novel and prose. It is literacy works which has concise words, rich lingering charm and strong emotional colors. It has high quality in ideological, literary and artistic aspects. Classical poetry carries the mission of aesthetic education. In situational teaching of poetry the ideological and emotional edification are paid more attention to, leading the students to experience the appreciation of the beauty, cultivate the aesthetic taste and make them have an active attitude towards life and value.

Effective Strategy on Classical Poetry Situational Teaching

Read Aloud from Heart to Experience the Situation

The ancients say “Read books a hundred times, its meaning is self-evident.” Classical poetry is different from other literacy works. It is short and pithy, with profound meaning and it is a form of language art which has rhythms and emotional colors.

Reading aloud from heart consists of at least four steps, first reading, listening and reading, imitating and reading and beautifully reading. During the first reading, the students need to pronounce the words accurately and understand the poems. The step of listening and reading is more complicated. The teacher reads the poem or plays an audio or video by a broadcaster and directs the students to divide the rhythms, find out the pause, stress, speed of speech, intonation processing and level and oblique tones. Then the students imitate and practice reading. In the course of beautifully reading the students practice reading with a background music. Playing imagination, the students imagine the main images in the poem as vivid pictures, enter the poem’s scene and experience the poet’s feelings rising and falling. Reading aloud from heart not only develops the students’ ability of language comprehension, but also arouses their sensory organs. It is helpful for the students to experience the poet’s smart life and sincere feelings contained in the static text.

To Reproduce the Situation with the Help of Perceivable Pictures

Classical poetry has the characteristic that poem exists in painting while painting contains poem. “An integration is made up of poem and painting.” Said Su Shi, a famous poet in Song Dynasty. Qian Zhongshu also said there is connection between painting theory and poetry theory. A poem is made up of a series of artistic images-imagery. The images together compose a picture which has a rich meaning, expressing the “situation” in the poet’s heart. With the help of resources suitable for the poem’s situation, such as pictures, films of the poem and a direct situation created with sand painting, the teacher can change the static words into visual images which can be felt. Intuitive images can inspire the students’ imagination more, like building a cognitive bridge between the abstract words and perceivable images, which leads the students into the situation of classical poetry. Take Ma Zhiyuan’s “Tianjingsha-Qiusi” for example, there are only twenty eight words, but with nine natural scenes, withered vines, old trees, crows at dusk, small bridge, running water, houses, ancient path, westerly wind and lean horse, forming a picture of autumn suburb sunset. A homeless man riding a lean horse appears in the desolate scene. The teacher reads the poem with background music, inspiring the students’ imagination with the picture, leading them to the situation, experiencing the poet’s melancholy mood and the feeling presented in it.

Music Makes the Situation Colorful, Enhancing the Emotional Experience

Music is a kind of artistic form which is strongly lyrical and a picturesque language. Tchaikovsky once said, “When a language is not able to express some feeling, a more eloquent language will be
on the stage fully armed—music.” In classical poetry teaching, the teacher can use music as supplementary means, rendering teaching situation and setting the emotional atmosphere identical to the poem. When teaching Liu Yong’s “Yulinling,” the teacher asks the students to listen to a solo named “Changtingyuanman” played with Xun, a traditional Chinese musical instrument. The tune of the music is very sad and mild, making up a sad atmosphere of farewell. The students read the poem with background music to make up an atmosphere of parting so as to experience the hero’s misery and melancholy. Some of the poems are revised into beautiful songs. “Classical Biography of Poetry” is a live performance which combines classical poems with music and is performed by the singers. All these are very popular for the students. The teacher may adopts the resources in the class to make the students to enjoy the charm of classical poetry in the beautiful music and songs and creating a unique aesthetic experience.

Create a Situation about Questions Inspiring Thinking

Bruner, American education and cognition psychologist, he thinks that the most valuable thing is the learners’ process of personal experience about the learning materials in a situation of questions [7]. The core task of classical poetry teaching is to create a situation of questions to inspire them to think. For the poem content, the teacher looks for a door to create a situation of questions to make the students get a feeling of the situation and experience the emotions. When designing the questions, the teacher should take into consideration the breadth and depth of the students’ thinking. “Questions” is the principal line of the students’ learning activity, so the teacher’s aim of creating a situation of questions is to inspire the students’ cognition motivation and to make them think deeply about the text and push forward their research so as to complete the learning task effectively.

Language Description to Inspire Imagination and Lead in a Situation

Language description is also a teaching strategy to lead in a situation. Classical poems are implicit, leaving the readers endless space to imagine. The teacher’s language plays an important part in conveying feelings and ideas and rendering emotions. The teacher may directly present the situation accompanied by vivid language description in order to enhance the students’ understanding of the poem’s imagery. As the students grow up, their logical thinking and abstract thinking gradually mature. The teacher leads the students to imagine according to the text and instructs them to rewrite the poem into prose. The students will actively enter the situation of the poem, with the scenes presented in their brain. Language description can enhance the students’ subjective feelings so that they can understand the poet’s feeling when writing the poem.

Conclusion

Based on the theory of Constructivism and Reception Aesthetics, classical poetry situational teaching accords with the students’ cognitive law. It is able to make full of the teaching resources and to comprehensively connect the teaching content with audio & video, pictures, language, questions, etc. to foster the students’ interest, inspire them to think and motivate their intrinsic emotion. It is helpful for the students to explore actively, to enter the artistic realm of classical poetry, to learn about its charm and for the teachers to improve the teaching effect.

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