

The Application of Project-based Learning in English and American Literature Courses

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Keywords: Project-based Learning, English and American Literature, Application.

Abstract: The paper aims to explore the application of project-based learning (PBL) in English and American literature based on its characteristics of realism, practicability, comprehensiveness, activeness, exploration and standardization, the complexity of knowledge in English and American literature courses, as well as the improvement in students' aesthetic and experience abilities on novels, poems and dramas. Various projects shall be chosen in accordance with different teaching objectives and requirements. As we all know that there are much knowledge of English and American literature to remember, such as, the background of every period, schools of literature, main representatives, representative works and writing styles. Teachers can design pop quizzes to help students remember. Performances of classic dialogues, discussions and reports are chosen in novel appreciation. Students need to read poems aloud and recite some of them in learning poems, while they can learn dramas by performances. Meanwhile, it suggests that writing papers are adopted instead of final exams and students' achievements are decided by the usual and final performance. The paper shows that students shall have more enthusiasm on their learning if different projects with various forms, clear goals and interests are designed in accordance with diversified teaching objectives.

1. Introduction

Legutke& Thomas, a foreign scholar explain the definition of PBL, showing that students learn and apply the language structure, vocabulary and skills to complete the project and present the final results under the teachers' guidance with the project-based learning. The project is a action plan for co-construction and consultation, which is a theme& task-oriented teaching method and a result of consultation from all the participants. British and American literature courses aims to cultivate students' reading, appreciation and understanding of the original English literature to promote their basic language skills, humanistic quality as well as the understanding of western literature and culture. Meanwhile, it requires students to explore the love, the relationship between people and nature so as to drive their humanistic cultivation. So teachers should guide students to complete poetry recitation, group discussion, drama rewriting and performance and thesis writing in order to achieve this goal. Students can be familiar with the basic theories and methods of literary criticism, expand their knowledge and learn literary and cultural knowledge by reading and analyzing English literary works. Also their English can be improved by training their ability to feel, think, analyze and express texts. The teacher will give students the standard of course grade in the first class, which includes the final score-the score of the term paper, accounting for 50%, and the performance in learning for 50%. The performance mentioned above should involve attendance (20%), quizzes (20%), poetry recitation (20%), drama show (20%) and class discussion (20%).

2. Quizzes are designed to promote students' memory for the key knowledge in different literature periods

One of the significant teaching objectives in British and American literature goes to make students learn the key knowledge in different literature period. We adopt a textbook *The Quintessence of*

English and American Literature -A Reader's Guide (2nd edition), edited by Long Maozhong, Yan Jinglan and Wanghui, published by East China University of Science and Technology Press as there are only two points in the school training program. There are more than about 50 works written by more than 40 famous British and American writers in this book, which shows the general information of English and American literature by the introduction of works from the major literary schools in each period. However, there is some introduction about the characteristics of each period and the authors written in Chinese, so the teacher should give students some explanation in English. Students will be required to draw mind maps in line with the book, including the time of these periods, their literary characteristics, main representatives and their works for the first time. Also teachers need to make pop quizzes according to the above teaching objectives. Some notes should be considered as follows: 1. The targeted, important content should be arranged, such as the specific time of these periods, the characteristics of literary works in each period, representatives and their works. 2. Questions should be concise, proper and various kinds of questions, such as choice, translation, true-or-false, matching questions. The time for each quiz should be less than 10 minutes. Students just need to learn the basic literary knowledge instead of memorizing the noun explanation. 3. Quizzes should follow the teaching progress and all the information should be known by students in advance. Students will be informed one week before the test. We believe that students would have a basic, intuitive understanding of the characters, main writers and their works of British and American literature in various periods through this simple in-class test.

3. Class Discussion and Dialogue-acting of Classic Novels are designed to improve students' understanding of novels

Class discussion and dialogue-acting of classic novels are designed for students to have a better understanding of these novels, specially the critical novel, including the critical realism and modernism. Love, marriage and survival are the eternal themes of the novel with different writing style and techniques. Each discussion should be divided into four groups. The notes for discussion are as follows: 1) There must be enough knowledge to discuss. That is to say, students should learn the figures, plots as well as historical background of the novel. Meanwhile, they need to have some enlightenment on their own lives. Teachers should teach students to think and help them write some key words or give 3 to 5 questions for their thinking. 2) It should be controlled in 20 minutes for group discussion and then 3-5 minutes for each group reporting. 3) Teachers should inspect their discussions, knowing how they cooperate with each other, whether every students is involved. And also teachers should remind the time. 4) It is important for students to have comments from teachers immediately. It should be not over 45 minutes for each discussion. Teachers can provide discussion activity after students already have enough knowledge. Group discussion is needed. So how to grouping is a question. Firstly, the teacher should ask students to count numbers from one to four successively. After counting, students who count one belong to Group one, students who count two belongs to Group two. There are four groups. Each group will complete the group discussion standing in a circle in the four corners of the classroom with a piece of A1 paper and several color Markers. Students should decide their roles independently, including leader, recorder, painter and speaker. It takes 20 minutes for students to discuss and write. There are only pictures and key word on the paper without a complete sentence. The teacher needs to walk back and forth checking their progress in each group, answering their questions and reminding the time. Time's up, all the discussions should be stopped. The speaker from each group shall have a report one by one. The group who is less than 3 minutes should be deducted points, or who is more than 5 minutes should be stopped immediately.

4. Poetry Recitations are designed for students to discover the beauty of poetry

Poetry mainly involves narrative and lyric poetry, whose beauty requires repeated recitation. It is essential for students to learn the rhythm of the poem and the expression of the poet's emotions in lines by repeated recitation. As we all know there are a lot of classic sentences in poems. Therefore,

students can improve their oral English, language sense as well as their sentiments by reading poetry, and also upgrade their English writing by reciting classical poems. The notes for reciting poems are as follows: 1. Task requirements and time should be clear. Giving the poem's name and time, the teacher prints out a form to study commissary in the first week and asks students to recite the poems at the every time. 2. The teacher need to analyze the poem from its sound, sense, topic and classical sentences, which can make students learn the real beauty. 3. Listen to the radio and read after it. 4. The teacher should se the time and criteria. The teacher should record their reciting time, which is not over 3 minutes. The teaching task can not be completed if the reciting time is over the regulated. Meanwhile, students who can not recite should do it later. Otherwise, others may not have a good preparation. Some pressure should be given to students. Every student need to recite two poems. If there are not enough poems, they can find some from other places. However, the same poem can be recited by at most 4 persons. A slew of students shows that it is hard to learn the pronunciation and emotion when reciting at the beginning, and then they can feel the beauty of poetry after repeated recitation with the radio. It is said that there is an improvement in their pronunciation unconsciously.

5. Drama Performance Boosts Students' Emotional Experience

There are two parts in drama performance. One is a small project that is to have a show with 3-5 minutes. Students can select a plot from the textbook, British and American classic novels or movies for the show. Every student has two times to perform. The other one is a big project, which is to adapt and perform one of Shakespeare's plays. The small project is to warm up for the big project, boost students' enthusiasm for drama, and learn how to use body and emotional language finishing performance. It is very difficult for us to reinterpret Shakespeare's plays and then have a performance. Four tragedies are often chosen – King Lear, Hamlet, Othello and Macbeth, and some plays are very popular among students – Romeo and Juliet, the Merchant of Venice. The themes and outlines of these plays should be given to students for voting in the first week. The script of the selected play in Chinese and English version should be handed to students. Students are divided into five groups. The task for each group is rewriting and acting for one act. The performance starts from the fourth week and ends in the eighth week for each act finishing in one week. Every students should participate in the related work, such as screenwriter, director, prop production, actor and logistics, etc.in the first round. And then the selected students who have the better performance would form a new team to join the competition at the end of the term. These students can be given some extra points in their school performance. They need to rehearse from the twelfth week to the fourteenth week after the adaptation of the script is finished in the eleventh week. The drama performance competition will be held in the evening of the fifteenth or sixteenth week as well as the chorus of English songs. Thus everyone can be involved. The whole activity will last for 90 minutes, including 3 drama plays from three classes with 25 minutes for each one and English songs with 3 minutes for each. Some awards should encourage students' performance. With some conflict preparing for the performance, they are very excited when they finish the performance. Some students write that although they have some discussion, even conflict when they make preparations, such as script adaption, lines reciting, modification and prop production, we have a better understanding of each other and our friendship is stronger. Meanwhile, we learn more about life by crying, laughing with the characters in the drama. Shakespeare's play has been held for four times. The undergraduates always mention their drama performance when they think their college life.

6. The Final Paper Cultivate Students' Ability to Understand the Selected Topic and Their Writing Skills

The course has a final paper instead of a final exam, which is more difficult for students. So teachers should be responsible for the process. The notes are as follows: 1) the topic and related PPT should be prepared by students. There must be contents and questions& answers listed on PPT for teachers' modification. All the PPTs should be submitted in the third week. Those who get the

approval can prepare reports from the fourth week, while the students who fail need to correct and resubmit. All the reports should be finished in the tenth week. 2) Abstract. Teachers should explain how to write the abstract in the tenth week, requiring that students need to show the purpose, process and results of the paper. The abstract should be handed in the eleventh week. 3) Introduction. Teachers should teach how to write the introduction while they review students' abstract in the eleventh week, requiring that there are three parts including the significance of the topic, the researches from other scholars (this is the key part for checking, note is a must), the research content of this paper. 4) The main body and references. Teachers should explain the main body of the paper, while checking their introduction in the twelfth week, requiring that the first draft should be handed in the thirteenth week. 5) The first draft and final draft. Teachers revise students' first draft and check their final drafts in the fifth week. Two students are chosen in each class helping to collect all the papers and the summaries of the course (attached at the end of the paper), print and compile a volume. All the papers together with the video of the drama competition should be put into a paper bag for archiving.

7. Summary

The creativity of this subject goes to more detailed application of Project-based Learning in English and American literature, involving three specific aspects: Firstly, this paper pays more attention to the further, definite project in line with the previous teaching experience instead of just talking about the method in general. Before there is a routine that the characteristics of the times and main works shall be explained according every period in English and American literature course. However, there are some different teaching methods adopting in line with the various literary themes (novel, poetry and drama) as mentioned above. It is important that students are the key for learning, which means that teachers need to guide students to analyze themes and roles in the dramas, finish the discussion and recitation of poetry and so on. Secondly, teachers need to give some advice on the term paper including dissertation proposal, abstract, introduction, first draft and then an illustrated collection of English and American literature. Finally, teachers and students can enjoy their own Shakespeare's plays by rewriting and rehearsal. The collection of essays and the video documents of their performance must be a great accomplishment for students which is conducted by PBL method.

Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by the Application of Project-Based Learning in English and American Literature Course, which is the 2017-2018 Foreign Language Education Scientific Development Planning Project in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, (Grant NO. GXSKXM—17-17).

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