

Research on the Reader's Response Criticism Theory and Teaching of English and American Literature

Hui Zhu

School of Foreign Studies, Xi'an Medical University, Xi'an Shaanxi, 710021, China

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Abstract: This article analyses the embarrassing situation of the gradual marginalization of English and American literature courses in recent years. At the same time, it points out that there is a certain relationship between students' loss of interest in learning English and American literature and outdated teaching methods. Under the influence of utilitarianism, students are more willing to put the emphasis of language learning on examinations and textual research, but ignore the fact that English and American literature reading plays an important role in improving students' comprehensive language ability. In response to this phenomenon, this article explores the introduction of reader response criticism theory into the teaching of English and American literature, and attempts to construct an interactive teaching mode of English and American literature. The traditional "teacher teaches, students accept" is transformed into "teacher guidance, student communication". In order to improve students' initiative in learning English and American literature.

1. Introduction

Readers' response to criticism is a school of critical theory that emerged in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Compared with the literary acceptance theories in Germany and Europe, this first-class school emphasizes the role of readers, pays more attention to the investigation of readers' reading activities, and advocates critical methods that mainly analyse readers' feelings and reactions during reading. The main representative of readers' response to criticism is the famous contemporary American critic Stanley Fish. His central argument is "meaning is an event". The "event" here refers to "something that a reader participates in and happens to the reader", "an event that occurs between words and in the reader's mind, that is, the reader's feelings and reactions in the process of reading the text. Because there is no such thing as the certainty and undeterminedness of the text, a literary fact is a reaction fact, and literature only exists in the mind of the reader. The purpose of the reader's response to criticism is not to seek the meaning of the text, but to describe and analyse the reader as accurately as possible the reading process continuously reacts to the text in chronological order and records the reader's reading experience. Fish believes that only by analysing the reader's feelings from the perspective of reader activity is "really objective, because it recognizes the flow of meaning and experience. Because it leads to the place where the behavior takes place, that is, the active consciousness of the reader." Readers are the object of literary services, and they are also the interpreters of literature from text symbols to meaning systems. In writers, works and readers in the relationship, the latter is not a passive recipient, but a creative force. The work is written for readers, and the aesthetic value of the work can only be reflected in the process of reading by the reader. The process of reading by the reader is actually the work and the process of aesthetic communication between readers is not a one-way indoctrination between the writer and the work. In the process of reading, the writer's work and the reader actually present an interactive relationship.

2. The Formation and Development of Readers' Response to Criticism Theory

As a peak in the history of Western literary criticism in the 20th century, readers' response to criticism theory was formed in the United States in the 1960s. During this period, critics began to

pay attention to reading, accept readers' self-awareness, and attacked the text-centric criticism. In the 1970s, the native American theories combined with the philosophical hermeneutics, structuralism, and reception aesthetics that emerged in the European continent, forming a critical genre that is not only in line with European reception aesthetics but also has local characteristics—reader response criticism. Reader response criticism theory advocates shifting the attention of literary criticism from the work itself, that is, the text, to readers and reading reactions. It believes that the meaning of literary works depends on the reader's personal creative interpretation, and the meaning of the work is actually the reader's “creation”. Stanley Fish is the most local representative of “Reader Response Criticism”. In his view, in the whole process of literature, the activities of readers should not only be seen as a means to understand the text, but as the same thing as the text. Therefore, the activity of the reader itself becomes the source of all literary value. Since literature is what happens when we read, the value of literature depends on the value of the reading process. Reader response criticism theory pays great attention to readers' subjective consciousness in the process of literary reading, and encourages readers to understand and appreciate works based on their own experience and experience, so as to complete the process of “recreating” the text. Therefore, different readers will have different understandings of the same work due to different life perceptions and reading states; and the same reader, with the growth of life experience, richer aesthetic experience and changes in reading status, will have different understandings of the same work. Reading at different times will produce different personal feelings.

Some basic ideas that readers respond to criticism will have a positive effect on the teaching of English and American literature. For example, readers' response to criticism theory believes that the history of literature should be a history of acceptance. This concept was put forward by the receiving aesthetician Jaus. He pointed out that as the history of reception, the protagonist of the history of literature is the recipient—the reader. The reader thus becomes the protagonist of his thoughts. Jauss believes that the reading and writing of readers and writers in a certain period are subject to the unique views and literary conventions of this period. These views include views on literature itself (such as genre, style, form, etc.). It also includes views on the background of literature. In the relationship between the writer (creator), work (narration behavior) and reader (receiver), the reader is an active and creative factor, rather than a passive and purely reactive link. “It is a force to create history.” Completed literary works can not exist without the context of their acceptance, reading and interpretation. It provides different artistic visions for readers in different eras and different environments. Therefore, the existence of readers, readers in different environments (epochs, cultures, nationalities), will make different interpretations of specific works. The work that is not read by the reader is the work that has not yet been finalized; the reader's reading practice makes the work change from words to actual works, making it real. Therefore, the meaning and connotation of the work cannot be confined to the author, nor is it confined to the text like New Criticism and Structuralism; the meaning is finally completed in the reader's reading activity.

3. Reader Response Criticism Theory and Related Research on English and American Literature Teaching

Learn from readers' response criticism theory and change teaching concepts. By extending the results of literary theory research to the teaching practice of English and American literature, we may get some useful enlightenment. From the development of Western literary criticism theory, it can be seen that literary research first shifted from focusing on writers to focusing on works, and then to studying readers' acceptance and experience, completely releasing readers' acceptance and interpretation of works to the center of research. Like the development and transformation of western literary criticism theory, two “transfers” should also be realized in the teaching of English and American literature. The first time was the transfer from “teacher” to “knowledge content” teaching, and the second was the transfer from “knowledge content” teaching to “students”. In fact, the first “transfer” has been realized, and what needs to be done now is to realize the second transfer, so as to construct a student-centered teaching model that focuses on students' feelings and

experiences in teaching. In English and American literature classes, students are both learners and readers. According to the theory of reader response criticism, readers are the interpreters of the transformation of literature from the textual symbolic meaning system, so the students are the center of literature teaching. But in many literary classes, the feelings and experiences of students (that is, readers) are completely abandoned, and teachers become their substitute readers. In this way, the teacher's reading experience becomes the student's reading experience, which is equivalent to the student having been eating what the teacher has chewed, how can it taste? It is not nutritious. Therefore, to achieve the purpose and requirements of the teaching of English and American literature, the second "transfer" in the teaching of English and American literature must be realized, that is, the transfer from "knowledge content" to "students' feelings and experience".

Fully pay attention to students' experience and feelings. First of all, the factors of recipients and the participation of learners should be considered. Literary works as "texts" are static in themselves. The meaning of the works lies in the acceptance and understanding of students and the continuous experience of the unfolded works. In the teaching of literature class, teachers should pay attention to the emotional reaction of students to the work itself. The first thing the teacher needs to ask is how the students feel when reading the work, not how they think. While reading the works, students start to imagine based on the descriptions in the works, so pictures of life reappear in their minds. Literary works are the products of the author's experience, feeling and thinking about life. Therefore, the teaching of English and American literature should not only focus on the teaching of literary knowledge, but more importantly, should pay attention to students' experience and feelings. Literary works provide readers with a broad imagination. Therefore, it is very suitable to organize classroom activities so that students can discuss and even debate on topics of interest to them. Teachers can guide self-study, set up questions, think about difficulties or key points together, express personal feelings, debate and other forms to enable students to truly participate in the teaching activities of literature class. Of course, there is a factor that cannot be ignored is that teachers should affirm, comment, encourage and supplement students' speeches in time. In this way, on the one hand, it can guide students' speech from a macro perspective, and on the other hand, it can greatly arouse the enthusiasm of students and form a virtuous circle of classroom teaching. Therefore, the discussion of English and American literary works in the classroom is an effective way to enable learners to participate as a complete person, providing learners with an excellent opportunity to express their opinions and feelings, so as to improve learners' humanities Purpose of accomplishment level, literary appreciation level and language expression ability.

Second, let readers gradually form the ability to master literary formulas and meanings through reading experience and accumulation. For readers, any literary masterpiece is inexhaustible. It is an inexhaustible source of imagination and re-creation. It can inspire thoughts and cause reveries. Its deepest meaning varies from person to person and from time to time. Literary teachers should ask themselves whether they are consciously cultivating students' literary perception ability, whether they can guide students to think and understand complex problems, and whether the questions raised follow the laws of literary appreciation. If the teachers who teach literature lack the experience and perception of literature, and lack the understanding of the complexity of literature, it is difficult to cultivate students' literary perception ability. One of the tasks of literature teaching is to use "interpretation strategies" to communicate directly with literary works in multiple levels under the guidance of the teacher to cultivate students' literary ability. Teachers should transform the teaching activity from a closed, one-way teaching activity to an open, variable, multi-directional and multi-level communication activity, so as to encourage students to use their own wisdom to acquire this literary ability.

Focus on the cultivation of students' language ability and social practice ability. For English majors, the function of English and American literature courses is to allow students to learn and understand English and American literature knowledge, read and appreciate representative works, and another important function is to train and cultivate students' language ability. In the English and American Literature Selected Readings, many famous articles in British and American literature are selected. On the one hand, these famous articles are precious materials for teachers to guide

students in literary appreciation, and they are also the best materials for students to learn English language, because literary language is processed and refined by writers. The original language of life is the best model for student experience and imitation. The reading process itself is not only a process of literary experience and appreciation, but also a process of language reading training and learning. Teachers should encourage students to dare to think, speak, do, and innovate. They should not criticize the contradictory viewpoints or even the wrong viewpoints put forward by the students, but actively guide them, because literary criticism is not limited to one family. This greatly improves students' enthusiasm for thinking about problems and expressing themselves, which creates an opportunity for oral training and English thinking for students. The teaching philosophy of taking students as the center and paying attention to the emotional experience of students has created many opportunities for students to talk. Their thoughts and opinions are appreciated and concerned by everyone. This teaching method creates a relatively relaxed and pleasant teaching atmosphere. Not only let them learn literary knowledge, they are also conducting language learning and training. In addition, in this way, students have a larger space for thinking activities, which greatly promotes the development and improvement of students' innovative ability.

4. Conclusion

Literary works are the best materials for language learning, but at the same time they are also life textbooks. Allowing students to explore the complex social life issues involved in the work is an effective way to improve their thinking and analysis capabilities. It is undeniable that teacher explanation is a way to input knowledge, but the absorption of literary knowledge depends more on the participation, communication and experience of the recipient. The “interactive” teaching method is to design a stage for students to show their abilities. On this stage, students can show their knowledge, comprehension and language arts and other talents. In order to enrich the content of the classroom speech and highlight their expressing personality, they not only need to consult a large number of reference materials, but also analyse, summarize and summarize on this basis, and put forward their own opinions. It is not only conducive to expanding the depth and breadth of their knowledge, but more importantly, it effectively mobilizes the subjective initiative of students in learning, and is conducive to giving full play to their creative thinking and personal expertise.

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