

Research on the Application of "Process Drama" in Junior High School English Teaching under the Background of Disciplinary Education

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Abstract

In the context of the "double reduction" and "disciplinary education" policies, how to improve students' overall quality and application ability in English learning without imposing a burden has become a very important topic. This requires placing students in specific contexts, fully exerting autonomy and creativity under the guidance of teachers, while exercising teachers' comprehensive application of theory and interdisciplinary teaching methods. This paper aims to enrich the first and second teaching space of English teaching for junior high school students through the innovative teaching model of "process drama", thereby improving the moral education effect of the curriculum and the comprehensive development of students. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to conduct a questionnaire survey and interviews with 82 middle school students from S Junior High School in N city, and also interviewed 3 teachers. Research has found that students have a strong interest in process drama, but their understanding is not deep. Therefore, this study proposes some improvement strategies and suggestions for applying process drama to middle school English teaching.

Keywords

Double Reduction; Process Drama; Disciplinary Education; Junior High School English Teaching.

1. Introduction

With the implementation of the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework and Extracurricular Training Burden of Students in Compulsory Education Stage" (referred to as "Double Reduction") and the emphasis of the Party and the state on patriotic education for young people, the education project of "Great Ideological and Political Courses" for young people urgently needs to be implemented. Some of the shortcomings in China's education system, such as overly fixed forms, exam oriented teaching, and the lack of creativity and pleasure among students in the curriculum process. How to improve efficiency while reducing stress and burden, and on the basis of extending school hours and reducing extracurricular courses, to enhance course experience and participation has undoubtedly become a hot topic in the Chinese education industry.

At the beginning of the 21st century, various definitions and interpretations of "drama teaching", "creative drama", "process drama", "educational drama" and "educational theater" gradually began to become clear, and "process drama" is effectively filling the problems in China's education system. Anderson (2012) stated that this approach "depends on students providing dramatic content, rather than teachers controlling the curriculum," advocating for

the cultivation of free and diverse individuals, and utilizing the educational wisdom of drama to activate and awaken the spirituality of the human soul. So teachers have been working hard to tackle the daunting challenge of integrating a large amount of content into a small amount of time (Goalen: 2001). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers and students to cooperate with each other in the classroom and better integrate process drama into the classroom. This article mainly analyzes the teaching mode of process drama and proposes corresponding teaching strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Relevant Research at Home and Abroad

2.1.1. Studies on Process Drama Abroad

The concept of educational drama can be traced back to the 18th century, when French Romantic literary master Rousseau(1762) mentioned the concept of "learning in drama" in *Emile*, which opened the door to educational drama in schools. Process drama specifically refers to educational drama that focuses on students' participation in the entire process, playing fictional characters, actively exploring the situation of expression and reflection. Process drama is centered around the process of dramatic creation and interpretation, and has the following three characteristics: the audience for the performance of process drama is the participants of the drama, not the traditional audience; attitude is more important than performance; there is no pre-designed script in the process drama. Firstly, it provides participants with an irreplaceable sense of personal involvement and a high degree of immersion. Based on the role mission and historical background given by the script, it transforms thinking and behavioral patterns, expanding the breadth of thinking; Secondly, such a sense of participation does not directly bring about a standard for judging good or bad. The traditional performance-based assessment method has been broken, and the wholehearted attitude or perfunctory approach of participants has become a shared experience for all participants, determining different levels of completion and the direction of the plot; Once again, scripts without predetermined endings can better unleash the creativity of participants, allowing students to explore the development of the plot independently within a certain range, deepen their impression, and also become more curious due to the unknown.

The earliest literature of drama related to education can be traced back to 1998, according to Julie Dunn(1998). In 1930, American drama educator Winifred Ward proposed the "Creative Drama Teaching Method" based on his own practice and published the book *Creative Drama Techniques*. In the UK, teacher Finlay Johnson's dramatic teaching and educator Cadwell Cook's first concrete application of dramatic methods in art curriculum teaching. Therefore, dramatic teaching methods have begun to develop in European and American countries.

After 1950, Britain developed the Slade tradition of children's drama education. By the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s, Dorothy Heskett, Gavin Burton, Jonathan Nylanders, and others had developed educational drama into mature DIE/TIE methods. This is a fictional role-playing and improvisation centered theatrical activity called "process drama", which focuses on students' participation, understanding the meaning of knowledge through feelings, and discovering possibilities through mutual communication. Through the establishment of multiple educational theaters, they carried out customized and regular theatrical activities for specific schools (or kindergartens), which was widely recognized by the education industry at that time. At the same time, in recent years, many scholars have also begun to explore new ways of integrating and innovating their own educational drama culture with foreign cultures and experiences. Jun and Eriksson (2023) studied Chinese and a Norwegian classroom approach in different situations with foreign drama or performing ways to find out the connection and acceptance level. They found that even from a cross-cultural perspective, foreign drama is more

likely to attract students' attention and curiosity at the beginning, but due to the fact that drama itself is a re creation and interpretation of local culture, there are still many cultural connotations that are not suitable for the local environment, which may create some obstacles in understanding and execution. On the contrary, if the drama or history of the country is applied for integration, middle school students can better grasp and accept it, and internalize and comprehend the meaning conveyed by the drama at a deeper level.

2.1.2. Studies on Process Drama at Home

From the perspective of research time, the earliest literature can be traced back to 2007, while most of the literature was published after 2019, indicating that the research on drama teaching and ideological and political education has a short development time and a fast development speed. As Chen (2022) said, the process of gamified role-playing and experiencing life context is a way for young children to gain life experience and guide their thinking, imagination and observation since 2016, with the support of national policies. After reviewing relevant research literature on CNKI, it was found that domestic literature has a certain quantity foundation and is mostly conducted from the following disciplinary perspectives:

The research from this perspective can be roughly divided into three categories: the first category is higher education, which is the mainstream of domestic research. The main theme is to use the red gene as the main theme, combined with the development of ideological and political education in universities. Zhou (2023) suggest that strengthening ideological and political education for college students and cultivating new era college students with firm beliefs and faithful practice of socialist core values is the focus of higher education work. Introducing red classic dramas into college students' ideological and political education classrooms is beneficial for enhancing the effectiveness of college students' ideological and political education. Qian (2023) indicates that process drama can be widely used in teaching activities, with the aim of improving aesthetic ability and cultivating morality and cultivating people.

As for the path and medium of integrating process drama into teaching practice, Deng (2022) expressed, in terms of the traditional concept of integrating the red gene into university professional courses, it has not achieved a deep integration of ideological and political elements with professional course teaching. In the new media environment, the construction of ideological and political courses in university professional courses is also one of the main reasons why the application of online information resources is too conservative, which leads to the difficulty of integrating red culture into the professional courses. In response to the above situation, she believes that using network information technology and combining theory with practice to integrate red resources into professional curriculum teaching activities will inevitably play an important guiding role in the formation of students' ideas, values, and moral concepts, and the cultivation effect of students' innovative consciousness, innovative thinking, and innovative ability will also tend to be more ideal.

Exploring comprehensive strategies for improving students' ideological and political literacy in various disciplines in drama teaching as Yang (2023) believes, there is a low proportion and marginalization of drama teaching in the selection of high school textbooks. The overall selection rate is about 7%, and most of them are selected articles without in-depth analysis, let alone discussing the value of deduction and application.

Exploring the integration of drama, ideological and political education from the perspective of discipline integration, the study at home mainly elaborates on its application in teaching, analyzes and demonstrates the feasibility and uniqueness of its application in teaching practice, but most of them focus on students or majors with artistic performance skills, or irregularly select a small number of students with talent for performance within a local area for superficial practice, (Ding Liu 2022; Li Fan 2022; Hong Lu 2022, etc.).

Since 2019, more and more scholars have begun to pay attention to the exploration of innovative forms of ideological and political education in drama from the perspective of new media, mainly focusing on breakthroughs and utilization of traditional forms of ideological and political education supported by emerging technologies. The attention to process drama has also increased to an unprecedented level since the introduction of educational drama into China, which is currently a hot topic, It also meets the guidelines and expectations of education policies well.

2.1.3. Summary

In summary, existing research literature on integrating drama teaching and ideological and political education has conducted multi-level and beneficial explorations from different disciplinary perspectives on various educational stages, certain majors, and emerging technologies, forming rich theoretical resources on drama teaching and ideological and political education. However, due to the different focuses of research, there are still some shortcomings in the existing scientific perspectives, research methods, and research content, which are manifested in the following aspects:

From the perspective of research disciplines, most of the existing domestic and foreign literature focuses on theoretical research on higher education, with few targeted studies on primary education in China. The research on primary education mentioned above is also more reflected in a single skill based teaching task, such as reading, speaking, listening, etc. The application of process drama in ideological and political education in primary education is still blank in China.

From the perspective of research content, most existing papers are eloquent about the combination of drama teaching and ideological and political education, proposing hypotheses and methods, but rarely supported by practical data. Especially in China, there is only one study on scripts in drama teaching on Zhiwang; In the stage where bilingual teaching is particularly emphasized in junior high school, there are no papers on developing bilingual scripts and ideological and political education elements.

From domestic and international analysis, it can be seen that there is a more comprehensive understanding of process drama in foreign countries. However, compared to domestic literature, more emphasis is placed on the combination of traditional drama, and there is still great room for development in the application of process drama.

From the perspective of research methods, most of the existing papers focus on the application and practice of offline modules, but there are still shortcomings in the practice and experience of online channels.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

This article is based on the innovative form of "process drama" used by S Junior High School in N city for situational teaching that combines education and entertainment. Red classics, revolutionary stories, and other content are integrated into "process drama" through translation, achieving the integration of English teaching and ideological and political education. Based on the requirements of double reduction and subject education, the literacy of students and teachers is improved, and some teaching suggestions are proposed. Therefore, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the current situation of junior high school English teaching under the background of subject education?
- (2) What is the attitude and understanding of students and teachers towards process drama?

(3) What methods can integrate process drama into junior high school English teaching to achieve subject education?

3.2. Research Subjects

The experimental samples of this research are all from SongZhaoQiao Junior High School in Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province. The researcher chose 82 students from different grades as the participants. In order to avoid the influence of other interferential factors on this study, the researcher specially selected participants with similar proportion of boys and girls as the research objects (42 girls and 40 boys).

They have been learning English for 6 years or more, possess different English learning strategies and mastery levels, and have a wide range of grades. They can provide good feedback on the current situation and interest of junior high school students in English learning at different stages of English learning, which is conducive to analyzing the current situation of junior high school English teaching and the popularity of process drama. In addition, It is also possible to glimpse whether the integration of ideological and political theme dramas into daily English teaching can make them more interested.

3.3. Research Methods

3.3.1. Questionnaire

Due to the common phenomenon of stereotyped exam oriented education, lack of interest and participation among students in the process of English learning, and the requirements of comprehensive quality in the context of the new era's double reduction policy and subject education, this study adopted a questionnaire survey method. The researchers designed a survey questionnaire to investigate the current status of English teaching among junior high school students and their understanding of process drama. There are a total of 20 questions in this questionnaire. The author divides these questions into four parts: The first part (1-5) is an overview of English topic learning for junior high school students; The second part (6-11) is about the forms of English classroom activities; The third part (12-16) is about the level of understanding of process drama; The fourth part (17-20) is about the possibility and acceptability of integrating process drama into the classroom, combined with ideological and political education. In the process of collecting questionnaire data, 82 questionnaires were distributed to students, and under the guidance of teachers, students were asked to fill out and complete them according to their actual situation. To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the research, this questionnaire does not include the student's usual grades.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results of Questionnaires

In order to clarify the procedure, the experiment started from early November to mid January. The research is divided into three stages: pre experiment, experimental implementation, and post experiment. Firstly, before the experiment, we consulted three English teachers at SongZhaoQiao Junior High School in an attempt to understand their views on students' English learning and whether they applied process drama and ideological and political elements to English teaching. In addition, a questionnaire survey was conducted on 82 students who were expected to participate in the experiment, and 9 students from different grades were selected for the first interview to understand their views on the integration of ideological and political education with process drama into the English topic. All students are required to answer the questionnaire independently. Then, the author collects the results.

Secondly, during the experiment, students were divided into different groups and assigned roles based on the pre designed red drama script. The teacher first explained the plot content

and introduced the roles, and the students selected their own roles for deep learning, independent interpretation, and expression. The entire process is expressed in English and there is no predetermined outcome throughout. The plot will be developed into multiple branches based on the student's interpretation, leading to different outcomes. This is also where the fun of the experiment lies, as it can better stimulate students' autonomy and creativity, and transform the role of the teacher from a teacher to a participant, bringing the distance between the teacher and the students closer.

Finally, at the end of the experiment, students were asked to fill out the questionnaire again, observe whether there were any changes in the results, and conduct interviews with three participating teachers and nine students again to exchange their experiences and insights. The second exchange is to gather the opinions of teachers and students on the new bilingual classroom teaching form based on process drama incorporating ideological and political elements, or in other words, whether these methods are feasible in the current context of double reduction in junior high school teaching. Then use SPSSAU to conduct statistical analysis on the questionnaire results and discuss them.

4.2. Analysis of Students' English Learning in Junior High School

81.7% of respondents expressed interest in English, and over 70% of students believe that the difficulty of learning English comes from understanding the practical application of language expression/text output requirements. At the beginning of class, English teachers occasionally provide situational guidance, but with the popularization of various extracurricular activities such as campus art festivals, most students have already participated in the arrangement and performance of drama (especially English drama), and have strong enthusiasm and participation. Classroom activities are still led by teachers, but the interaction and autonomy among students have been greatly improved. 76.8% of students believe that whether they are more interested or not is the biggest factor affecting learning efficiency and outcomes.

4.3. Analysis of Students' Ideological Education in Junior High School

At present, the disciplinary independence of ideological and political education is still strong. Although teachers and students generally recognize the importance of ideological and political education, it is still less included in the comprehensive training system of other disciplines, and its training effect is difficult to be evaluated. It is still unknown whether it has a good shaping effect on students' values, outlook on life, and worldview.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Major Findings of the Research

This study aims to explore the application effect of process drama in junior high school English teaching, in order to improve students' English oral expression ability and language application ability. Through empirical research, we have found that process drama has a significant educational effect in junior high school English teaching, which can effectively promote the improvement of students' English oral expression, language application ability, and political and cultural awareness. At the same time, it also effectively enhances students' classroom enthusiasm and participation. The application of process drama can stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning, enhance their confidence and teamwork ability, and thus promote their comprehensive development. In addition, process drama can provide students with more practical opportunities and feedback, which helps teachers better guide and motivate students, improve their learning effectiveness and interest. In junior high school English teaching, the application of process drama can provide students with a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, stimulate their learning interest and enthusiasm, and thereby enhance their learning motivation. The teaching method of process drama can place students

in a real context, allowing them to learn through interaction and making it easier for them to master the basic knowledge and skills of the English language. At the same time, the application of process drama can promote teamwork and creative development of students, cultivate their confidence and expression ability, and improve their comprehensive quality and subject education level. Therefore, we believe that process drama is an effective English teaching method that can be widely applied in junior high school English teaching. Meanwhile, teachers should focus on guiding and motivating students, providing more practical opportunities and feedback to promote their learning outcomes and interests. This research achievement is of great significance for improving the quality of junior high school English teaching and the level of subject education.

5.2. Limitations and Expectations of the Research

This study explores the application effect of process drama in junior high school English teaching and has achieved certain research results. However, there are still some limitations to this study. Firstly, the experimental sample size of this study is limited, and there may be certain biases and errors. A larger sample size experiment is needed to further verify the reliability of the research results. Secondly, the research methods and data analysis of this study are relatively simple, requiring more rigorous and complex research methods to deeply explore the application effect of process drama in junior high school English teaching. In addition, this study only explored the application effect of process drama in junior high school English teaching, and there are other teaching methods and strategies that need further research and exploration. Future research can delve into the application effects of process drama in junior high school English teaching from multiple perspectives. Firstly, further research can be conducted on the application effects of process drama among students of different age groups and English proficiency levels, in order to explore the applicability and effectiveness of process drama at different learning stages. Secondly, from the perspective of disciplinary education, we can explore the role and significance of process drama in disciplinary education, further improving the quality of junior high school English teaching and the level of disciplinary education. In addition, the application effects of other teaching methods and strategies on junior high school English teaching can be explored to enrich the methods and means of junior high school English teaching, and improve students' learning interest and effectiveness. Finally, future research can also explore the application effects of process drama in teaching other disciplines, in order to enrich interdisciplinary teaching methods and means, promote the comprehensive development of students, and improve their overall quality.

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