The Construction of Task-based English Literature Teaching Mode

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Abstract. Integrated advanced talents of foreign languages are much needed in our economic society. But the traditional teaching mode of English Literature fails to meet the request of talent training regulated in Teaching Syllabus for English Majors because it ignores the participation of the cognitive subject in the teaching process. In order to eliminate this disadvantage, this paper proposes the task-based teaching mode based on constructivism and the theory of response.

Introduction
Nowadays, English is becoming more and more important and integrated advanced talents of foreign languages are in urgent need in our economic society. English Literature, as one of the main courses in English curriculum is facing great challenge of reform. The traditional teaching mode of English Literature not only ignores the participation of the cognitive subject, namely students, in the teaching process, but also fails to mobilize students’ inherent cognitive potential and subjective initiative. Task-based teaching of English Literature mode proposed in this paper can largely eliminate these disadvantages of the traditional teaching of English Literature. It is hoped that through this pattern, teachers can stimulate learners’ autonomous learning ability and improve their comprehensive English quality so as to cultivate more and better integrated advanced talents to meet the needs of the times.

Background of Study
According to the English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors (2000), “English Literature aims at cultivating learners’ reading, appreciation and understanding of English literary works, grasp the basic knowledge and methods of literary criticism in order to promote their language skills and improve the humanistic quality of learning.” The importance of English Literature course for foreign language majors is beyond doubt, but there are a lot of disadvantages in the traditional English Literature teaching mode.
First of all, traditional teacher-centered teaching mode of English Literature ignores the subjective initiative and the participation of the learner in the teaching process. The learners are in a position to accept, which does little help in forming their unique views of literature appreciation, not to mention the cultivation and innovation of their literary criticism and the improvement of their humanistic quality.
Secondly, like most university courses, the traditional English Literature teaching measures different learners with the same yardstick. This is not a suitable way to comprehensively test the learners’ overall literary ability or give full play to their personal literary potential.
Based on this, the paper puts forward the concept of task-based teaching mode for English Literature.

The Construction of Task-based Teaching Mode of English Literature

The Basic Principles of Designing Task-based English Literature Teaching
The following principles should be followed in the design of scientific and effective tasks for Task-based Teaching:
**Purpose Principle**
In task-based teaching activities, the tasks designed should be authentic, real and believable so as to meet the needs of learners to the maximum extent. It should aim at stimulating learners’ interest and learning motivation and helping develop learners’ divergent thinking and rich imagination.

**Level Principle**
Teachers should not only take full account of learners’ individual differences in designing tasks, but also analyze each learner’s practical experience and ability. Based on their different levels of learning in the study, teachers can set different tasks, making learners clear about their literature learning objectives so as to set a reliable goal to meet the needs of different levels of learners.

**Diversity Principle**
The boring and tedious task is liable to make the learners lose their interest in literature study. During the task-designing process, tasks like question and discussion are two good kinds of tasks for English Literature course.

**Coherence Principle**
When designing tasks, the teacher should ensure the continuity of the task. The task should be closely linked with each other. The purpose is to enhance learners’ deep understanding of literary works or schools and gradually promote the self-learning habits of learners.

**The Theoretical Basis of the Task-based English literature Teaching**
The main theoretical basis of task-based teaching is constructivism and the theory of response.

**Constructivism Theory**
The constructivist learning theory holds that the “situation” is one of the four elements of the learning environment. The “situation” here is equivalent to the “task” in the literature teaching. The “task” can help learners to construct sense and knowledge system. It should be an important part of the instructional design. So it is better for teachers to create a task that is helpful for learners to construct sense.

**Response Theory**
According to Response theory, the relationship between literary works and learners is a kind of free dialogue. The significance of literary works can be achieved only through the active participation of the reader. At the same time, because there exists a large amount of blank space in literary text, the deep meaning and possible implication can only appear after the active reading of the learners.

Through the above analysis, we can see that the implementation of Task-based English Literature teaching has excellent feasibility.

**The Operating Process of Task-based English Literature Teaching Mode**
The operation process of task-based English Literature teaching is divided into three stages: the task creation before the class, task creation in class and task creation after class.

**Task Creation before Class**
Before-class stage is also called the self-learning stage. The purpose of this stage is to make the learners clear about the general learning content so as to pave the way for deeper learning.

The task design at this stage can follow the principle of diversity and hierarchy, but with definite and specific purpose. It’s necessary for teachers to anticipate the possible effect of it. At the same time, teachers’ tasks should also be enlightening enough to promote enquiry. It shouldn’t be too difficult or too easy. Only in this way can it help to stimulate the interest of learners, guide learners to find their own problems, solve the problem with the help of existing technology, and ultimately develop the subjective initiative.

**Task Creation in Class**
The in-class task covers the stage of close reading, namely deep reading, of literary works. This is not only necessary for the understanding and appreciation of the literary works, but also can solve learners’ language problem. The task at this phase should be explorative so that it can make learners feel a sense of mission and responsibility. They can especially feel a strong sense of accomplishment when completing the task.

**Task Creation after Class**
The period of after-class is the stage of literary criticism. Teachers should monitor the whole process of how the learners complete the task and what teaching effect they can achieve. At the same time, superficial reading is not sufficient to exert literature’s function of enlightenment.

Therefore, after the first two stages of teaching literary works, teachers should encourage learners to comment on it. The task at this stage is the comments on the literary works or writers. Independent and critical thinking is the ultimate teaching goal for the course of English Literature. The task-based English Literature Teaching Based can arouse the students’ interest in literature and achieve the goal of leading their self-accomplishment.

The Advantages of the Task-based Teaching Mode for English Literature

Compared with the traditional English Literature teaching mode, the task-based teaching mode has a distinct advantage.

To Achieve Effective Teaching Interaction between Teachers and Students

In traditional English Literature teaching, the teacher is the center of the class, while task-based teaching advocates the learner-centered teaching, and emphasizes that the teacher is the guide of knowledge construction. Teachers should give full play to their role as a guide. It is their goal to instruct learners to study consciously and complete tasks successfully. The teachers should try their best to achieve effective teaching interaction in order to maximize the effectiveness of teaching.

To Maximize Learners’ Initiative

Traditional teaching only spoon-feeds knowledge into learners. It neglects the cultivation of learners’ quality. Task-based teaching can mobilize the internal factors of learners to the greatest extent and cultivate their initiative and pioneering spirit so as to promote the establishment of higher learning goals.

To Optimize Teaching Evaluation Mode

Traditional English Literature teaching regards the result of one final exam as the learners’ final grade for the course, which is not suitable for a comprehensive assessment of the overall level of the learners’ ability.

The task-based teaching adopts appropriate evaluation mode. Learners’ academic assessment is mainly focused on testing learners’ ability of evaluation and critical analysis of literary works. This comprehensive evaluation of learners’ English Literature course can be objective in providing direction for their study of literature and help learners find a better way to study literature.

Summary

In summary, compared with the traditional teaching mode, the task-based teaching is an effective teaching mode. The teachers should continue to integrate the theory with practice, insist on learners’ status in teaching so as to get better teaching effect and create a better environment for the teaching reform in which learners’ overall quality can be ideally improved.

References