Study of Teaching Method for Fiction Creative Writing

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Keywords: Fiction creative writing; Presentation type teaching; Inquiry-based teaching; Group teaching.

Abstract. This paper studies how to break the traditional paradigm of fiction writing teaching, and tries to find a new teaching paradigm which is more creative and effective. The modern teaching theory and creative writing theory provide the theoretical support for the construction of Chinese-style teaching paradigm of fiction creative writing. This paper believes that, during the teaching of fiction creative writing, the teacher should flexibly and appropriately select the teaching method to achieve different teaching objectives. Firstly, for knowledge acquiring, the presentation type teaching should be the main method. Presenting the creation theory in a form of story can make the abstract theory more understandable and stimulate the students’ learning interest, and can make the lecturing more vivid. Secondly, for cultivation of creative thinking, the inquiry-based teaching should be the main method. The question-oriented study and discussion enable the students to participate in teaching and maintain a positive learning state all the time. The student-centered teaching is beneficial to improve the students’ thinking level, enhance their creativity, and drive the development of teaching. Thirdly, for group interaction, the group teaching should be the main method. It is conducive to stimulate creativity, show self, and correct, supplement and enrich the ideas discussed.

Introduction

For writing teaching in college, the traditional teaching paradigm is the very first obstacle for teaching through more effective method. What is “paradigm”? “Paradigm is a way to look the world, a model or pattern recognized by the academic community.” In a broad sense, “A paradigm is a collection of normative concepts and attitudes that support an activity” [1]. Generally, a powerful paradigm will bind us. We will take it for granted, and ignore the existence of other paradigms. In fact, the paradigm is not static. It will change with the changes of society. During the traditional fiction writing teaching, the teacher emphasizes on the explanation of fiction theory. The teaching method of theory followed by example is generally adopted. Though there is practice, it is focused on skills, rules, and rhetoric devices. The scattered, random and non-systematic teaching cannot achieve satisfactory teaching effect [2]. How to break the traditional paradigm of fiction writing teaching, and replace it with a new teaching paradigm which is more creative and effective? The concept must be updated and the action must be taken. The modern teaching theory and creative writing theory provide the theoretical support for the construction of Chinese-style teaching paradigm of fiction creative writing. Under the guide of modern teaching theory and creative writing theory, this paper studies the fiction creative writing through three aspects: presentation type teaching, inquiry-based teaching and group teaching.

Presentation Type Teaching—Knowledge Acquiring

Nowadays, knowledge can be obtained through various electronic channels. However, knowledge is complex, acquiring knowledge is still a major reason for college or university education. The highly effective way to acquire knowledge is lecturing. The presentation type teaching mentioned here is one of the lecturing methods. There are many kinds of presentations, such as language
presentation, picture presentation, action presentation, physical model presentation, etc. The presentation will let the lecturing more vivid and stimulate the students’ learning interest. The presentation type teaching for fiction creative writing teaching refers to: The teacher presents the experience of creative process to the students very specifically to let them participate in and feel the same possessing of creative experience. The presentation type teaching conforms to the teaching strategy of promoting information processing in the cognitive learning method. One of the rules is “presenting information in a certain situation” [1]. That is to say, when certain information is abstract, an easy-to-understand scenario should be presented to put such information in. The presentation type teaching in fiction creative writing teaching is precisely to put the content to be presented into certain scenario to achieve vivid effect.

Main Feature of Presentation Type Teaching—Present Writing Theory through Story

The French narrator Genette believes that the story is a narrated event. From the structure of fiction, the story is the lowest structure. Therefore, writing a fiction equals to tell a story [3]. For those who study writing fiction, if a story is well told, a fiction is basically formed. The story is so important to writing, as well as to the teaching of fiction creative writing. Most of us think that the lecturing of knowledge is be abstract and recapitulative, but also it can be concrete and detailed. The presentation type teaching of fiction teaching puts the fiction creation theory into an easy-to-understand scenario for vivid teaching in a concrete and detailed way. To be concretely, the creation theory is often presented through a form of story. The “story” here is not a story in the ordinary sense, but a story that has been carefully processed by the teacher and given the teaching function. There are two main types of the story: "question" type and "demonstration" type.

The story of question type refers to a flawed, problematic story that is used in teaching. It may be a plain story, or a story without any dialogue of characters. The teacher uses such story to explain and present the problems found during the creation of fiction, and to train the students to use life experience to add character conflicts or dialogue of characters. In fact, the question type story is used as incorrect demonstration of writing fiction.

The story of demonstration type refers to a story that carefully selected by the teacher as a demonstration. The teacher uses it to tell the requirements of and the right way to write fiction.

In fact, there is another type of the story called “continuous” type story, which combines the features of “question” type and “demonstration” type stories. The “continuous” type story refers to a story often appears during the teaching process, which is immature at very first, but gradually matures. During this period, under the guidance of the teacher, the teacher and students jointly nurture the story. With the students' understanding of the rules of fiction writing, the story will be constantly revised and supplemented, and will become fuller and eventually become the collective teaching achievement.

By presenting the creation theory in a form of story, the abstract theory can be taught vividly, and the students’ interest in learning can be stimulated, and their understanding of such abstract theory can be deeper.

Problems Should Be Paid Attention to During Presentation Type Teaching

The Teacher Should Be Double-position Type. The core of presentation type teaching is to concretely present the experience of creative process to the students to let them participate and feel the same possessing of creative experience. Therefore, the requirements on the teacher is very high, and the teacher should be double-position type. On the one hand, if the teacher does not have any creation experience, the teacher cannot transfer real creation experience to the students. It is not to say that the teacher should be all-round or should be able to write all kinds of fictions. However, the teacher should have creation experience or ever wrote fiction at least. On the other hand, the teacher must have rich teaching experience and solid professional foundation, and master the rules and methods of education and teaching. All those are important factors to ensure smooth education. Only the double-position type teacher who can create fiction and understand teaching can guarantee the quality of the fiction creative writing class.

The Teaching Materials Should Be Localized. With the popularization of the teaching ideas of
creative writing in Europe and the U.S., learning from such ideas has become a must for the teacher teaching writing. At present, the teaching materials for creative writing teaching, such as stories and fictions, are mostly written by European and American writers. Some of these teaching materials can be used, while others are far from the actual life of the students. Therefore, the teaching materials should be localized. It requires the teacher to collect and write localized teaching materials to enrich the teaching content that close to Chinese actual situation.

Inquiry-based Teaching—Cultivation of Creative Writing

Though the presentation type teaching mentioned above can achieve vivid and easy-to-understand teaching, it is still a one-way communication. Only lecturing without discussion or collision of ideas, it is not helpful to cultivate the students’ creative thinking. If inquiry-based teaching is adopted together with the presentation type teaching, not only the knowledge and theory can be taught, but also the students’ creative thinking can be cultivated. So, what is inquiry-based teaching in deed? It refers to a teaching method to cultivate the students’ creative thinking through a series question. It suits the teaching of fiction creative writing since the writing process is creation process. Thus, the writer must have creative thinking. For fiction writing, the development of story line, description of the character image and the depiction of the life scene are a process of re-creating the real life. It requires the author to construct a story that is reasonable and logical in life through association and imagination based on life experience [4]. Therefore, during the teaching of fiction creative writing, in order to improve the creativity of the students, the inquiry-based teaching should be used.

Main Feature of Inquiry-based Teaching—Question-oriented Inquiry and Discussion

Promoting effective inquiry by the students through asking question is the key to inquiry-based teaching. How the students' creative thinking can be cultivated through inquiry-based teaching? Firstly, we need to know how the creativity is produced. There are several theories related to the generation of creativity, including genius theory, association theory, and divergent thinking theory. At present, most people believe that the creativity can be cultivated. The association theory emphasizes on the role of association and believes that "combining different views in a systematic way, especially in an unexpected way" can generate creativity. The divergent thinking theorist J.P. Guilford considers that the following factors are related to creativity: firstly; fluency, namely the generation of a large number of divergent thinking ideas; secondly; flexibility, namely the spontaneity to change preset mind; thirdly; originality, namely the uniqueness compared to others’ views; and fourthly; carefulness, namely the specification of details. Thus, during the teaching of fiction creative writing, creative thinking should be cultivated. The teacher should put forward the questions to give students the opportunity to think and enable the students to think creatively. This requires the teacher to master the thinking process and type, and use them to guide inquiry. There are three types of thinking: creative thinking, critical thinking and conversational thinking. Although some people think these concepts overlap with each other, it is helpful to emphasize the focus of thinking [1].

To cultivate the students' creative thinking, the questions raised should enable the students to think and associate positively, and should be able to expand the breadth and depth the students' thinking and inspire them to generate their own views. Besides, the students are required to give narrative answers. That is to say, the teacher should raise open-ended questions or narrative questions. The open-ended questions with multiple answers enable the students break the inherent mindset and generate thoughts and associations. For narrative questions, the students should answer them in a narrative way. For example, the question “If this event did not happen, will the situation be different?” is a narrative question. The narrative question drives the students to think and organize the answer carefully, which is helpful to cultivate the student’s creative thinking.

During the teaching process, the question is a driving force for the development of teaching. Under the driving of question, the teaching content is continuously expanded and enriched. For example, the question “How the story can impress readers and make readers feel various experiences of the characters and in turn create a sense of identity” can derive the content related to
identity and lead the students to think about the question. Through such questions, it can lead the students to think actively, improve their thinking level, stimulate their learning enthusiasm, and drive the development of teaching [5].

For inquiry-based teaching, the teacher does not only should raise questions by self, but also should encourage the students to ask questions and to actively study such questions. All in all, the inquiry-based teaching centered on the students should be formed to encourage the students to participate in teaching and keep active learning attitude.

Problems Should Be Paid Attention to During Inquiry-based Teaching

Good Discussion Atmosphere in Classroom Should Be Created. The teacher should not only tactfully design the questions to achieve teaching objectives, but also should create a good discussion atmosphere in classroom. It requires the teacher to: Firstly, encourage the students to actively speak, appreciate the questions analyzed or asked by the students from different perspectives, respect and accept the students' views even if the views are out of the ordinary, and allow the students to make mistakes in their speeches. Secondly, give the students enough time to think during discussion, or try to ask them to write their views on paper and then answer. By doing so, the students have enough time to think and the poor discussion effect caused by time lacking can be avoided. Thirdly, the discussion rules should be established to ensure the order and effectiveness of the discussion. The following principles can be referred to: the principle of encouragement, which is mainly to praise the students; the principle of constructiveness, which requires the views proposed must be constructive; the principle of non-argument, which only accepts criticism and makes record other than defend [6].

The Discussion Direction Should Be Controlled. During the discussion, the teacher should actively control the direction and promote the deep development of discussion. The teacher may repeat the views and ask the students whether they agree, encourage them to express their views, and ask new questions to promote the teaching process. The teacher should carefully listen to the students' answers and timely sum up valuable views. The teacher should maintain neutral when responding to the students' views. This will advance the discussion of the question and allow the students to think continuously. If the teacher affirms the students' answers as long as the students give answers, it is not positive to the deep discussion and research.

Group Teaching—Creativity Inspiration and Self Presentation

During creative writing teaching, the writing theory and practice are always closely linked. When teaching writing theory, the teacher always combines the presentation type teaching and inquiry-based teaching. During the class, writing training is required. In general, the students are required to complete writing training independently, while sometimes group work is allowed. However, when the practice is completed, how to evaluate the quality and how to ensure that the works of every student can be evaluated? At this time, the group, consisted of 5 to 6 students, can take such task in a high-efficient way. To be concretely, the group member should firstly present the fragments or works of their own, then the members give evaluation. Finally, works should be recommended for class presentation and communication. This kind of teaching form is called group teaching. For group teaching in the context of creative writing teaching, it is mainly referred to the mutual evaluation among group members. However, group discussion or creation may be conducted under the assignment by the teacher.

Main Feature of Group Teaching—Group Interaction

In the group teaching, the interaction is characterized by group interaction, including student-student interaction, group-group interaction, and teacher-student interaction. During the group communication and discussion, the student-student interaction can be achieved. Then, during the group-group communication and discussion, the interaction between groups can be achieved. During this process, the teacher may attend the discussion of certain group and will guide the
direction of communication and discussion, as well as evaluation. Therefore, the teacher-student interaction is involved during the teaching process.

The creativity of the students can be inspired through group interaction. Some studies have shown that the creativity generated by group interaction is 60%-90% more than the creativity generated by individual works. The number of options proposed by individuals is small, and it is far less imaginative than the one generated by group interaction. However, it cannot be sure that the option generated by group interaction is the optimal one [1].

The students can show themselves through group interaction. Each member of the group is required to present own works, while the others of the group are required to evaluate the works. Therefore, the students can show themselves through the presentation of their works. For beginners, the teacher should encourage them to open their hearts and to write their spiritual world from the actual life, especially the daily life.

Through group interaction, the idea discussed can be corrected, supplemented and enriched. By group teaching, the students can explore the question from different angles. Thus, they can understand other people's thinking and understanding of the same question, and then re-examine, correct, supplement and enrich own views.

Problems Should Be Paid Attention to During Group Teaching

The Teacher Should Timely Solute the Problems Found During Group Discussion. In the process of group discussion, conflicts may occur sometimes. For example, some students may attack others through language, or show inpatient during discussion, or lack the enthusiasm to participate in the interaction. At that time, the teacher should encourage the students to solve the problems by themselves, and guide them to analyze the cause and find the solution.

The Teacher Should Give Conclusion to the Group Discussion. The teacher should control the process of group discussion and give evaluation. The evaluation should include the important issue, the essence, and problems met. When giving evaluation, the teacher should give feedback to the group or certain student in an objective attitude.

Conclusion

If only one teaching method is used during whole teaching process, the result obtained will be limited. However, more achievements are required by the teaching. Therefore, during the teaching process of fiction creative writing, the teacher should adopt various teaching methods to meet the students’ need of acquiring knowledge and improving their creativity and writing skills. In other words, the teacher should achieve different teaching objectives through different teaching methods, such as presentation type teaching, inquiry-based teaching, group teaching, writing practice, etc. In this paper, the first three methods are focused. As to how to conduct writing practice, it is to be studied.

References


