

Class Design in the Teaching of Music Appreciation in Chinese High School Based on Modern Instructional Technology

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Abstract

The Music Curriculum Standards for High School, which is issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, has divided the high school music course into six modules, among which a module of Music Appreciation is included. According to the requirements of the Curriculum Standards and the analysis of the specific content of Music Appreciation, the modern instructional technology is of great significance for the instruction of this module. Taking two typical chapters in *Music Appreciation* (a textbook published by the People's Music Publishing House in 2013) as an example, this article makes an exposition of the way of instructional design with comprehensive application of modern instructional technology under the guidance of constructivism theory.

Key words: Instructional technology; Constructivism; Music appreciation; Instructional design

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INTRODUCTION

The national Ministry of Education promulgated and implemented *The Music Curriculum Standards for High School* in 2003, which is an important reform on the

music curriculum in high school in China as well as a part of the reform on the curriculum of foundational education in the new century. The new curriculum standards call for new implementation strategies. The advantages of modern instructional technology have brought great opportunities to the implementation of the new standards of the music curriculum in high school (Lai, 2013).

1. CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE INSTRUCTION OF MUSIC APPRECIATION

According to the new curriculum standards, the ultimate teaching objective of music appreciation is to cultivate the ability of students to appreciate music. Except for listening to a large number of musical works, the improvement of the ability to appreciate music and the musical accomplishment requires students to be familiar with relevant theories, background knowledge and historical and cultural knowledge of music. In accordance with the constructivism learning theory, we can create a series of leaning situations according to the teaching content with the assist of information technology, assigning difference tasks to students and guiding them to collaborate with each other in groups in those Situations, thus finally achieve the goal of knowledge construction. This teaching procedure is the typical application model of constructivism learning theory (Yan, 2005).

This module also explicitly points out that the teacher should cultivate students' ability of inquiry-based learning and cooperation spirit, while the theme of the constructivism learning theory is to guide students to achieve the goal of knowledge construction through inquiry and cooperation.

In the framework of constructivism theory, there are mainly three well-developed teaching models: Scaffolding Instruction, Anchored Instruction and Random Access

Instruction (Wang, 2005). Under the guidance of this theory, we pick up two typical chapters in *Music Appreciation* (an experimental textbook for the High School Curriculum Standards, published by the People's Music Publishing House in 2013) as cases to make an exposition of class design.

2. ANCHORED INSTRUCTION: THE SONOROUS FOLK SONGS OF NORTHEAST CHINA

This lesson is the first section of unit two named *The Sentiment of Tones: Wonderful Folk Songs*. In accordance with the curriculum standards, the learning of appreciating folk songs is an essential part of music instruction. We can deepen students' love for their country, enlarge their musical horizons and enhance their ability to appreciate music through appreciating folk songs in the different styles and genres.

This unit aims at guiding students to feel and experience different regional and ethnic style of folk songs, knowing some common forms of folk songs and then comprehending that the folk songs are important spiritual wealth of our traditional cultural as well as the treasure of the outstanding musical culture of the world. However, the instruction of this section requires students be familiar with basic knowledge of folk songs in advance, which is the foundation of reaching the teaching objectives of this section and later chapters.

2.1 Teaching Elements Design

According to the Anchored Instruction method, we shall design every stage of teaching in advance.

2.1.1 Situation Design

It is the key stage of anchored instruction, which shall have a direct effect on subsequent teaching effectiveness (Zhang, 2007). We create four Situations for this section.

Situation 1: Play a video clip of medley of folk songs from the TV program *Super Girls* by multimedia technology;

Situation 2: Play a video clip of medley of folk songs from the CCTV Spring Festival Gala.

The content of situation 1 is popular with young students, which can stimulate their interests, while situation 2 can help them feel the professional singers' performance exactly. These situations mainly aim to help students enjoy different styles of folk songs. By comparing the two situations, the students' aesthetic ability can be cultivated.

Situation 3: Show pictures, texts and videos, which reflect the local conditions, culture and customs of the Northwest China;

Situation 4: Play video clips of folk songs in films and television programs, which have great effect on the plot, atmosphere and expression of emotions. For instance, songs in the TV play *Crimson Romance*.

Situation 3 and 4 mainly help students to feel the charm of northwest folk songs and the spirit of northwest minority.

These charming and striking scenes create a set of the real situation for the students' experiencing music, just like anchors dropped during the sailing.

2.1.2 Pre-Task Design

In accordance with the teaching content, we will set a series of tasks for students to explore before the class, including:

1) Identify which region the folk songs belong to play in situation 1 and 2.

2) Figure out the basic knowledge about the natural geographical environment, living conditions and humanist environment of northwest district.

3) Figure out the basic knowledge of various folk customs sung in the folk songs of northwest region and realize the significance of folk songs in the life of toiling masses of northwest minority.

4) Figure out the territorial division of the tune of folk songs.

5) Be acquainted with the style and genre of folk songs such as *Hua Er* and *Xin Tianyou* (two types of folk songs) and have a knowledge of their regional distribution, forms and characteristics of melody.

6) Comprehend the characteristics of melody of the song *Ascending a Hill to Look at the Plain* and the implied meaning of its lyric.

7) Comprehend the singing style and structural features of the song *Dig up Potato* and understands the scene of life it reflects.

8) Comprehend the emotional characteristics of the song *Porters' Tune* and understand the scene of life it reflects.

Those issues are mainly clues for students to do inquiry-based learning before class. The teacher can ask other questions at any time according to specific circumstances in the class.

2.1.3 Independent Study

Curricular study must be closely integrated with extracurricular study in the model of constructivism teaching. We have provided students with plenty teaching situations (such as various pictures, texts and audios and videos) set up beforehand and tasks on the course teaching website on Campus Network. Students are required to study independently according to those situations and tasks a week in advance.

2.1.4 Collaborative Learning

The whole class is divided into several groups, each of which contains five or six students. Groups are restructured at regular intervals so that every student will have as many opportunities as possible to collaborate with different classmates in study. All the tasks of independent study should be finished in groups. The group members divide the study task into parts by themselves and each individual is responsible for a different part respectively. Before learning a new unit in class, group members shall schedule time for a group discussion, sharing each

other's outcomes of task and exchanging their learning experience, thus forming an unified learning report(in written or unwritten form), which may be further discussed and shared among groups in class.

2.1.5 Effectiveness Evaluation

According to the results of discussions in class, the teacher will know the outcomes of solving questions of each group and thus make an evaluation on the learning effect of this group.

2.2 Class Teaching Procedure

The class teaching procedure is student-oriented: the knowledge construction is completed by the students themselves, while the teacher plays a role of organizer and guide (Han, 2003). The following are the main steps of teaching procedure:

- 1) Show students situation 1 and 2 for appreciation.
- 2) Fulfill task 1 and 4. Each group sends a representative to make a presentation.
- 3) The teacher makes concluding remarks and completes the teaching of basic knowledge of this section: the differences in regional style of folk songs.
- 4) Show students situation 3 and 4 for appreciation.
- 5) Fulfill task 2 and 3. Each group sends a representative to make a presentation.
- 6) The teacher makes concluding remarks and draws forth the theme of this section, which is to experience the aesthetic charm of northeast folk songs.
- 7) Play the video of the song *Ascending a Hill to Look at the Plain*.
- 8) Finish task 5 and 6. The representative of each group makes a statement.
- 9) The teacher makes concluding remarks and brings out five knowledge nodes: the characteristics of the genre *Hua Er*, the background of this song, the melody and rhythm characteristics of this song, the meaning of its lyric and the aesthetic value of this song.
- 10) Play the video of the song *Dig up Potato*.
- 11) Finish task 7. The representative of each group makes a presentation.
- 12) The teacher makes concluding remarks and brings out four knowledge nodes: the composing technique of folk songs, the melody characteristics of this song, emotional features and aesthetic value of this work.
- 13) Play the video of the song *Porters' Tune*.
- 14) Ask a temporary question: "What does the *Porter* and *PoYi* (young married woman in the dialect of northeast region) mean?" Then the teacher makes comments on the answers given by students and introduces the scenes of a porter's life: Trudging through the desolate Loess Plateau with his livestock all year around, helplessly, hopelessly and solitarily, it is only by singing songs that could divert himself from grief and boredom (introduce it with relevant pictures).
- 15) Finish task 8. The representative of each group makes a presentation.

16) The teacher makes concluding remarks and brings out four knowledge nodes: the characteristics of the genre *Xin Tianyou*, the melody and structure of this song, the emotional features and aesthetic value of this work.

17) Play the three pieces of music continuously and show following questions on the screen for the students' thinking while listening: What do you think of the melody and rhythm of folk songs in northeast region? What characteristics of personality of northeast people do the songs express? Which social class's life do the songs reflect?

18) Students discuss and make presentation with free, in which the teacher will make comments.

19) The teacher makes a summary of the content learned in this section with background music.

20) Expansion and Sublimation: Encourage students to sing other folk songs which they are familiar within the class. Other students shall listen to their songs and guess which regions the songs belong to.

21) The teacher makes a conclusion of this class, informs the learning content for next week, assigns study tasks for the following week and finally ends the class with music.

22) Evaluation: There are a large number of discussions among students as well as dialogues between teacher and students throughout the classroom teaching. The teacher manages to assure a majority of students have the opportunity to make a presentation through ingenious arrangement (For example, teacher could require each group to send a different representative to make a presentation at each time). By means of presentations made by students, the teacher can evaluate the learning effects of students.

3. SCAFFOLDING INSTRUCTION: MIRACLES OF PIANO MUSIC

This section is the second section of unit 9, *The Romantic and Fancy World of Music*, which contains three sections. The topic of this unit is the introduction of romantic music. Students will have learned the historical background of the formation and the style features of romantic music in the previous section. On this basis, the teacher constructs a conceptual framework of "the artistic essence of romantic music" in the new teaching content of this section according to the theory of "Zone of Proximal Development" so that he can link, extend and expand students' understanding of romantic music and improve their ability to appreciate romantic music (Luo & Zhang, 2007). Therefore, scaffolding instruction is more suitable for teaching this section.

3.1 Teaching Elements Design

3.1.1 Scaffolding

By centering on the two pieces of romantic music written by two composers introduced in this section,

and combining with relevant background knowledge of romantic music learned in last section, the teacher constructs a conceptual framework of the artistic characteristics of romantic music in accordance with the requirements of Zone of Proximal Development and then determines the specific theme of this section: The romanticists are always not satisfied with reality, but endeavor to seek for the ideal beauty, which stands in sharp contrast to the ugliness in reality. They are keen to express their personal subjective emotions by unusual things or themes of exotic flavor. Romantic music generally focuses on expressing the rich inner feelings of people as much as possible, which is exactly the essence of romanticism.

3.1.2 Stepping Into the Situations

When Chopin left Poland for France in September, 1813, he heard about that Warsaw Uprising, which was aimed at fighting for the national independence, had failed. Filled with grief and indignation, he composed the famous melody *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor*. Taking the connection between the sad but stirring ending of Warsaw Uprising and the emotional features expressed by the melody as a breakthrough point, the teacher introduces a specific node of the conceptual framework of this section, that is, the strong personal feelings expressed by romantic music.

There are two situations set up in this section.

Situation 1: Play a slide of plenty of historic photos on Warsaw Uprising with relevant subtitles and take *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor* as the background music.

Situation 2: Play a clip of *Warsaw Uprising*, one documentary film of the series of *The Tragedy of the Century: The Bloody Battle between the Soviet Union and Germany*, starred by Michail Ulyanov. (This 2-hour film is too long to be played in class, so we put the film in the online course resources bank on campus network. Students are encouraged to watch the whole film before the class. The teacher only plays some highlights of this film in class.)

The horrific scene of Warsaw Uprising reflected by those two situations will have a great effect on the visual sense and feelings of students and thus enhance their aesthetic perception of *Revolutionary Etude in C Minor*.

3.1.3 Exploration and Discovery

Under the enlightenment and guidance of the teacher, the students complete the exploration of a series of questions independently so as to card and analyze the knowledge system in this section. By the exploration, the students' knowledge of music and their ability of music appreciation are continuously enriched and enhanced in the conceptual framework of "the style features of romantic music". The pre-tasks designed for this section mainly contain:

1) Figure out the age and era background of the formation of Romantic Music.

2) Figure out the four major periods of Chopin's life (Period in Warsaw, Period of Warsaw Uprising, Zenith in Paris and Later Period).

3) Figure out the historical background of Warsaw Uprising.

4) Be acquainted with the first theme and the second theme of *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor* and comprehend its emotional features of each part.

5) Understand the basic knowledge of etudes.

6) Figure out the background knowledge of the life and creations of Liszt.

7) Understand the structure of the piano suite *Liebestraum* (It contains three pieces of music)

8) Be acquainted with the theme and emotional features of *Liebestraum*.

9) Compare the different feelings expressed by those two pieces of music.

3.1.4 Collaborative Learning

It's similar to the anchored instruction which is also completed in groups. Group members should explore the questions above independently and then discuss with each other, exchange and share outcomes of exploration and learning experience, thus to form a group common outcome of collaborative learning. The collaboration among groups shall be done in class.

3.1.5 Effectiveness Evaluation

The evaluation of learning effect is composed of self-evaluation by individuals, mutual evaluation by group members and comprehensive evaluation of the teacher. The students are required to hand in a pre-task exercise of listening comprehension before the class, from which the teacher could see their self-evaluations. Combining with the mutual evaluations in groups, the teacher can finally make a comprehensive evaluation on the learning effects of every student (Xu, 2010).

3.2 Teaching Procedures

The main steps of teaching procedure are listed as follow:

1) Review the last lesson and introduce the new lesson.

2) Play clips of the film *Warsaw Uprising*.

3) Ask question: Which historical event does this film reflect? Please give a brief introduction of this event. The teacher shall make comments on the answers given by students.

4) Play a slide of historic photos of Warsaw Uprising, with *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor* as the background music.

5) Ask question: Please tell the name, composer and the composing age of this music. The teacher makes comments on the answers given by students.

6) Check task 2 and 3. Each group sends a representative to make a presentation, on which the teacher makes comments.

7) Ask question on task 1 while playing *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor*. Each group sends a representative to make a presentation on the background music.

8) The teacher makes concluding remarks to help students to realize the improvement of cognition for

the first time in the conceptual framework of the new lesson.

9) Play *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor* by MIDI software and show its score dynamically on the screen synchronously, so that the students can read the music while appreciating it.

10) Ask question on task 4, and ask students to hum the main theme and the sub- theme of this music.

11) Disassemble and play the first period of this music.

12) Ask students to talk about their understanding and feeling of listening to the first period.

13) The teacher makes concluding remarks. Show the main theme on screen and explain its style features of being fortitudinous and heroic. Show the technique of playing arpeggio with left hand moving quickly up and down. Show pictures of bloody battles between the heroes of Warsaw Uprising and enemies to guide students to feel the mood of composer, who is impassioned and difficult to calm down. By doing all those, the teacher can help students to realize the improvement of cognition for the second time.

14) Lead students to learn to sing the main theme with the accompaniment electronic musical instruments thus to enhance the cognition.

15) Disassemble and play in the second period of this music, and show the sub- theme on screen at the same time.

16) Ask students to talk about their understanding and feeling of listening to the second period.

17) The teacher makes concluding remarks and guides students to feel the grief and sadness expressed by this melody, which symbolizes that people lament the death of martyrs.

18) Disassemble and play the third period of this music.

19) Ask questions: Which theme does this part reproduce? What does it symbolize? Make the students discuss them freely.

20) The teacher makes concluding remarks: The third period reproduces the heroic theme of the first period, which symbolizes that people were still keeping fighting and the flame of resisting invasion hadn't been extinguished.

21) Listen to and appreciate the whole piece of *Revolutionary Etude In C Minor*, while asking: What is etude? What are its characteristics?

22) The teacher makes concluding remarks to help students to realize the improvement of cognition for the third time.

23) Play *Liebesträum*.

24) Ask questions: Whose work is it? What is its name? Who is the composer?

25) Students answer those questions freely, on which the teacher makes comments.

26) Replay *Liebesträum*, with the theme shown on the screen synchronously.

27) Ask question: What artistic conception does it describe? Ask representatives of groups to make presentations.

28) The teacher makes concluding remarks to help students to realize the improvement of cognition for the fourth time.

29) Recite the poem *I'd Like to be Rapids* by Petofi with background music to realize the enhancement of the students' cognition. It can be recited by the teacher or students. If the latter, the students are required to have a rehearsal in advance.

30) Ask question on task 9 and ask group representatives to make presentations.

31) The teacher makes concluding remarks and a conclusion of the essential characteristics of romanticism art, thus helps students to realize the improvement of cognition for the fifth time.

32) The teacher makes a conclusion of this class, informs students of the learning content and assigns tasks for next week, and finally ends the class with music.

CONCLUSION

In *The Music Curriculum Standards for High School*, the specific requirements for the use of modern instructional technology are defined clearly. According to the new curriculum standards, different modules and different teaching contents in a same module have different characteristics. Therefore, we should analyze specific situations in teaching practices, adopting different learning theories to teach different modules and contents. The case study in this article is an exemplified research on this teaching concept, and we are continuously observing and researching the efficiency of this teaching model in the further study so as to modify the teaching design.

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