

The application of method acting in story writing instruction

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ABSTRACT: This study integrates the concept of method acting into the teaching content of story writing. Method acting refers to acting techniques applied within the performance system, which, through training, assist actors in mastering roles and flexibly interpreting them.

Through observational methods and drawing from life experiences, students practice transforming their experiences into stories. They learn to deepen character development, enhance emotional expression, enrich scene description, and improve the fluidity of plot arrangement, cultivating writing abilities and creativity.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to explore whether incorporating the concept of method acting can enhance students' ability to develop characters, and (2) to investigate whether students find writing easier after learning method acting.

Over the course of eighteen weeks, combined with assignment exercises, students are guided through creative writing. Finally, cognitive load scales, intrinsic motivation scales, and learning mode satisfaction are used to understand students' satisfaction and willingness to use this teaching and learning approach in the future.

Index terms: Method acting, storytelling, teaching

1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to integrate the concept of method acting into the classroom, allowing students to observe themselves and the people and things around them. This approach helps students explore various aspects of life, which serve as ingredients for storytelling. While understanding the world from their own perspectives, students are encouraged to consider viewpoints and perspectives of others. Through perspective shifts and repeated reflection, students practice narrating events from different angles. This not only enhances character development but also reflects the multifaceted nature of characters and society, thereby creating rich storylines. Just as the world is not simply black or white, characters are not purely good or evil. By delving into the inner world of characters, students gain a better understanding of their backgrounds, motivations, and emotions, thereby creating characters with depth and authenticity, imbuing them with a soul.

In these exercises, students draw inspiration from life rather than relying solely on imagination to create characters, scenes, and plots. In addition to effectively training narrative skills, students also practice crafting story structures, deepening character development, enhancing emotional expression, enriching scene descriptions, and improving plot fluency, thereby fostering writing skills and creativity.

2 LITERATURE DISCUSSION

In theatrical performance, to create vivid character portrayals for the audience, it's essential to navigate the balance between reality and fiction, resolving the contradictions between the two (Li, Xiang, 2021). Many actors employ method acting to bring characters to life. Beyond understanding the character's personality and life as outlined in the script, they must also be adept at observing behaviors and reactions of various types of people in real life and have a basic understanding of psychology. This concept can similarly be applied to writing, where, unlike actors passively interpreting roles, writers can actively select and create characters. Thus, aside from studying psychology, observation is the most rapid and direct method. By observing people and things nearby, writers can draw inspiration from life and understand how different individuals behave and react in various personalities and situations. With this as a foundation, students can consider how the characters they create should behave in the story to advance the plot.

This method of performance was established by the Russian theater artist Konstantin Stanislavski and has been widely applied in the theatrical world, profoundly influencing modern drama and performance. Within the method, concepts such as emotional memory, emotional transfer, emotional expression, and inner motivation are core principles, serving as cornerstones for drama and performance education.

Deci, Cascio, and Krusell's cognitive evaluation theory also emphasize that an individual's behavior is influenced by different reasons and goals within the context of the environment, distinguishing various motivational patterns (Deci, E. L., Cascio, W. F., & Krusell, J, 1975). Whether in learning or creative endeavors, it's essential to create environments that are conducive to enhancing students' motivation.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies this concept to the storytelling class, targeting second-year undergraduate students in the Design College. The teaching objective is to cultivate students' text writing abilities. The instructional content includes story text structure, character development, scene description, and dialogue techniques, culminating in the production of a complete story by the end of the semester. Initially, the story will be deconstructed using story cubes to swiftly grasp the key elements composing the story and utilize mind maps to practice extending abstract theme concepts into concrete objectives, gradually constructing a complete narrative.

Character design will involve analyzing common character archetypes and personality traits using character cards. Through observational methods, students will observe individuals with similar traits in their surroundings, recording observed behaviors and situations as reference. Detailed character traits and behavioral features will be constructed for the characters based on this data. Subsequently, using association methods within a time limit of five to ten minutes, students will swiftly jot down subconscious associative words for the characters. Based on these impressions, students will write the character's autobiography, using first-person self-disclosure to not only clarify the character's external features but also delve into the internal causes, motivations, and purposes behind these external features. Through this writing process, students will gain a deeper understanding of the characters, and the autobiography will serve as a record and reference for subsequent creations to prevent issues such as character behavior deviating from the established setting.

In the story, dialogue will be a vital element in advancing the plot. In class, dialogue technique analysis will be conducted using sample works to understand the impact of different dialogue styles on the plot and reading experience. Through recording everyday dialogue styles, students will comprehend the differences between life and story dialogues. Dialogue also serves as a crucial means to showcase character personalities. Therefore, students will practice simulating dialogues in different scenarios with various character personalities, enhancing the application of character impressions and dialogue techniques for appropriate use in embedding plot twists or advancing the storyline.

Plot development will focus on analyzing and practicing conflicts and turning points in the story. Many stories tend to become predictable due to the excessive use of existing patterns, often leading readers to anticipate the ending from the beginning. In such cases, unless the writing is exceptionally skilled, readers are likely to lose in-

terest in continuing. Creating appropriate conflicts within existing patterns to propel the plot to climax and arranging turning points to write an unexpected ending can create suspense, arousing readers' curiosity about the subsequent storyline.

This course will employ a threefold approach encompassing online, offline, and physical methods. In physical teaching, students will be encouraged to share their creative experiences and ideas. Teachers will incorporate narrative methods based on life experiences to make theoretical knowledge practical, enhancing students' understanding of classroom content. Simultaneously, offline and online discussions will be conducted to address students' creative doubts. Online platforms, such as establishing class communities, will provide spaces for sharing works, facilitating post-class discussions with teaching assistants, saving waiting time, and swiftly resolving dilemmas.

For assessing effectiveness, student learning outcomes will be evaluated through grades, anonymous questionnaires, and student interviews. Grades will primarily be based on assignments, discussions, and reports, evaluating student participation in discussions, assignment completion, and report content. Students will be asked to fill out questionnaires based on the teaching method of the semester, followed by interviews to understand their actual thoughts and learning experiences regarding the course.

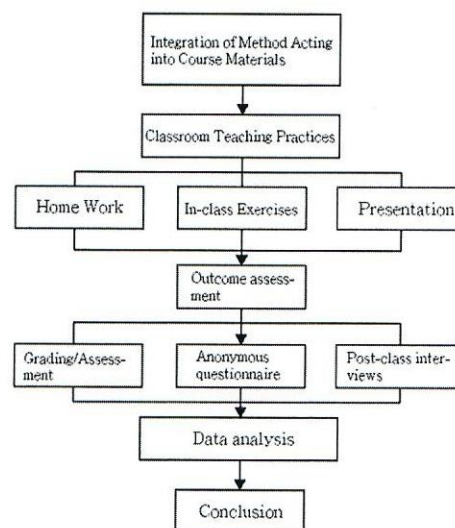


Figure 1: Research Framework Diagram

The research participants for this study were students enrolled in the current academic year, divided into three classes, with approximately 108 students in total after excluding those on leave or discontinuing. The gender ratio was approximately 4:6, with an average age of 19 to 20 years old. The study evaluated its effectiveness through observations of classroom situations, assignment practices, in-class and post-class discussions, and the comprehensive assessment of end-of-term outcomes. Classroom situations were primarily assessed based on the students' focus, interaction frequency, and attendance over eighteen weeks, including student inquiries, responses, and sharing. There were a total of eleven assignments, evalu-

ated based on submission and accuracy. Two in-class discussions and approximately five post-class discussions were held, with teaching assistants meticulously recording student participation, frequency, and discussion content to gauge improvement and corrective measures taken. End-of-term outcomes were evaluated based on the content, cover, back cover design, and layout of the books created by students. Post-semester interviews and questionnaire surveys were conducted. Three assessment methods (grades, interviews, and questionnaires) were employed to measure student learning outcomes.

Random sampling was used for the questionnaires among enrolled students, employing the Cognitive Load Scale to assess their thoughts on the teaching methods used during the academic year, aiming to understand their acceptance and learning effectiveness of these methods. Additionally, the Internal Motivation Scale and Learning Mode Satisfaction Scale were utilized to gauge students' satisfaction and willingness to use these teaching and learning methods in the future.

Table 1: Cognitive Load Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Alpha	N of Items
.711	8

Table 2: Assignment Grading Criteria

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Corrected Cronbach's Alpha if Deleted
In order to understand the content of this semester's textbook, many things need to be considered at the same time.	29.2143	38.660	.606	.634
The content of these learning materials is very complex.	30.2143	38.709	.658	.624
It's hard to find important information in the process of studying these materials.	30.0238	37.146	.641	.623
The design of this teaching material makes learning/creating inconvenient.	30.7143	40.502	.483	.664
It is challenging to identify and link important information while learning from these teaching materials.	30.5238	38.743	.595	.637
In the process of	28.5952	49.954	.152	.727

learning/creating, I not only try to understand the details of the content, but also try to master its structure.

I am able to correctly understand all the content through the practice process of learning materials.

Using method acting and observation techniques allowed me to better understand the themes of the story writing course.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Load

Descriptive Statistics		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	N				
In order to understand the content of this semester's textbook, many things need to be considered at the same time.	42	1.00	7.00	4.5714	1.72701
The content of these learning materials is very complex.	42	1.00	7.00	3.5714	1.62515
It's hard to find important information in the process of studying these materials.	42	1.00	7.00	3.7619	1.81873
The design of this teaching material makes learning/creating inconvenient.	42	1.00	7.00	3.0714	1.78603
It is challenging to identify and link important information while learning from these teaching materials.	42	1.00	7.00	3.2619	1.73991
In the process of learning/creating, I not only try to understand the details of the content, but also try to master its	42	2.00	7.00	5.1905	1.34777

structure.				
I am able to correctly understand all the content through the practice process of learning materials.	42	1.00	7.00	5.1667 1.32364
Using method acting and observation techniques allowed me to better understand the themes of the story writing course.	42	2.00	7.00	5.1905 1.38349
Valid N (listwise)	42			

Table 4: Reliability Statistics of Intrinsic Motivation

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.918	19

Table 5: Overall Statistics of Intrinsic Motivation

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean Item	Scale Variance De-Item	Corrected Total Variance De-Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I think this learning/creative approach very enjoyable.	85.1842	246.317	.827	.908
I really enjoy this learning/creative approach.	85.1842	249.019	.824	.908
I think this to be a fun learning/creative approach.	84.9211	252.237	.766	.910
This learning/creative approach catches my attention.	86.4474	263.876	.764	.913
I feel anxious learning/creating in this way.	87.0789	285.696	-.043	.929
I don't feel very relaxed during this learning/creative process.	86.4474	277.767	.089	.928
I feel a lot of pressure learning/creating in this way.	87.2632	285.659	-.045	.930
I think I will actively use this creative method.	85.3421	254.501	.681	.912

I believe this learning/creative approach gives me a sense of agency.	85.1053	252.529	.732	.911
I feel like I can choose the learning/creative approach.	84.9474	247.835	.823	.908
I feel that learning/creating in this way is my choice.	85.0789	247.264	.823	.908
I think I am very good at this learning/creating method.	86.2105	253.684	.619	.913
Compared to other classmates, I think I perform fairly well in this learning/creating method.	86.4737	248.688	.620	.913
I am satisfied with my performance in this learning/creating method.	85.8947	250.962	.801	.909
I am very proficient in this learning/creating method.	86.6579	270.285	.261	.922
After learning/creating in this way for some time, I feel that my abilities have improved.	85.6579	253.907	.819	.909
I think this learning/creative approach helps to increase my interest.	85.5000	247.392	.836	.908
I believe this learning/creative approach can help me acquire knowledge.	85.0263	253.161	.753	.910
I am willing to use this learning/creative approach again because it has value for me.	85.0526	253.565	.756	.910

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Intrinsic Motivation

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think this learning/creative approach very enjoyable.	38	2.00	7.00	5.3421	1.43840
I really enjoy this learning/creative approach.	38	2.00	7.00	5.3421	1.34116

I think this to be a fun learning/creative approach.	38	2.00	7.00	5.6053	1.30569
This learning/creative approach catches my attention.	38	2.00	5.00	4.0789	.85049
I feel anxious learning/creating in this way.	38	1.00	7.00	3.4474	1.46486
I don't feel very relaxed during this learning/creative process.	38	1.00	7.00	4.0789	1.69867
I feel a lot of pressure learning/creating in this way.	38	1.00	7.00	3.2632	1.55414
I think I will actively use this creative method.	38	3.00	7.00	5.1842	1.35278
I believe this learning/creative approach gives me a sense of agency.	38	3.00	7.00	5.4211	1.34830
I feel like I can choose the learning/creative approach.	38	3.00	7.00	5.5789	1.38782
I feel that learning/creating in this way is my choice.	38	2.00	7.00	5.4474	1.40842
I think I am very good at this learning/creating method.	38	1.00	7.00	4.3158	1.50863
Compared to other classmates, I think I perform fairly well in this learning/creating method.	38	1.00	7.00	4.0526	1.73902
I am satisfied with my performance in this learning/creating method.	38	2.00	7.00	4.6316	1.30324
I am very proficient in this learning/creating method.	38	1.00	7.00	3.8684	1.52760
After learning/creating in this way for some time, I feel that my abilities have improved.	38	3.00	7.00	4.8684	1.16645
I think this learning/creative ap-	38	2.00	7.00	5.0263	1.38499

proach helps to increase my interest.

I believe this learning/creative approach can help me acquire knowledge.

I am willing to use this learning/creative approach again because it has value for me.

Valid N (list-wise)

Table 7: Reliability Statistics for Learning Satisfaction
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.958	9

Table 8: Overall Statistics for Learning Satisfaction
Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
This learning task has helped me better understand the learning content.	32.923	35.126	.858	.952
In this learning task, I made an effort to observe differences in things.	32.974	35.657	.795	.955
Although this learning task was not easy, this learning/creative approach was not difficult to understand.	32.897	35.726	.812	.954
I find this method more challenging and fun than the previous method.	32.948	35.682	.777	.956
Using this method for learning/creating, I can gain some new discoveries or new knowledge.	32.820	34.941	.861	.952
Using this method for learning/creating allows me to approach learning/creating with	32.871	33.904	.863	.952

new methods or thought patterns.				
Using this method for learning/creating helps me learn to discern the characteristics of things.	32.846	35.134	.817	.954
Using this method for learning helps me observe the differences in things.	32.871	34.536	.895	.950
Using this method for learning helps me observe things from new perspectives.	32.846	36.449	.777	.956

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Learning Satisfaction
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
This learning task has helped me better understand the learning content.	39	2.00	5.00	4.0769	.83932
In this learning task, I made an effort to observe differences in things.	39	2.00	5.00	4.0256	.84253
Although this learning task was not easy, this learning/creative approach was not difficult to understand.	39	2.00	5.00	4.1026	.82062
I find this method more challenging and fun than the previous method.	39	2.00	5.00	4.0513	.85682
Using this method for learning/creating, I can gain some new discoveries or new knowledge.	39	2.00	5.00	4.1795	.85446
Using this method for learning/creating allows me to approach learning/creating with new methods or thought patterns.	39	2.00	5.00	4.1282	.95089

Using this method for learning/creating helps me learn to discern the characteristics of things.	39	2.00	5.00	4.1538	.87475
Using this method for learning helps me observe the differences in things.	39	2.00	5.00	4.1282	.86388
Valid N (listwise)	39				

4 CONCLUSION

According to the questionnaire results, as shown in Table 3, students generally believe that the teaching method incorporating method acting and observational techniques in this semester is more helpful for creativity. They can correctly understand the course content through the teaching materials and practice process. Regarding the difficulty of the teaching materials, most students did not have significant concerns. Although some found it difficult to recognize and understand the content, the majority of students were still able to adapt to and utilize it well.

Based on Table 6, most students consider this teaching method to be interesting and valuable, and they feel pleasure during the process. It effectively enhances their interest in learning and improves their abilities to some extent, although they feel they still lack proficiency. Regarding satisfaction with the learning mode, Table 9 shows that students mostly provide positive feedback, agreeing with the teaching and practice methods. They also acknowledge gaining new thinking patterns from it, which helps them observe things from new perspectives. In terms of teaching effectiveness, the feedback obtained from this study will contribute to future course direction and updates, while preserving student works to serve as references for future students' end-of-term goals.

5 REFERENCES

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