

# English Drama Performance in Early Childhood Education

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**Abstract:** English theatre performance is a curriculum that combines two disciplines, language and art, and because of the comprehensive ability it cultivates in the learning process and the unique form of presentation, it has been found in practice that the education of young children at this special period of time can see a significant increase in the learners, which is beneficial to the growth and progress of young children in all aspects. As a new and niche educational mode, English theatre performance has been applied for a certain period of time so far, but the age group of the audience is mostly concentrated in primary, junior and senior high school, and in recent years, some educators have applied it in undergraduate courses, but there are not yet any research reports or theoretical elaborations on its application in early childhood, and the educational system and system of English theatre performance are not yet perfect. In this paper, we will analyse the efficacy and role of English theatre performance in early childhood education from the perspective of special educational needs in early childhood, and give a more comprehensive account of the establishment of English theatre performance in early childhood education, as well as its practical approach and theoretical support. It is hoped that it can provide some models and methods for practitioners in early childhood education, so that they can get more help and inspiration in the exploration of early childhood education.

**Keywords:** English theatre performance, Early childhood education, Language education.

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## 1. Introduction

As one of the eight major arts, theatre performance is a unique stage art, which includes a wide range of artistic disciplines, such as literature, music, dance, and fine arts, so it has strong artistic synthesis, audience presence, physical and mental education, theatre healing, and quality cultivation. Theatre performances are based on different types of storytelling by the creators, as well as different styles of stage art, stage music, stage dialogue and other auxiliary stage vocabulary, which creatively present colourful and varied theatre performances. Theatre art is unique and everlasting. In the process of the development of theatre art, there are not only a large number of high-quality and pioneering theatre performances, but also the quality requirements and training system for performers tend to be complete, in which the theatre performing art has begun a journey back to the past, and there are also unique features in the re-staging or adaptation of classic plays. A large number of educators have discovered and tapped into the applicability and benefits of theatre arts, and by applying them to the educated, the unique characteristics of theatre performances have been brought into full play in the process of practice.

English theatre performance - educators combine the two disciplines of English language and theatre performing arts, on the basis of retaining the strengths of their respective disciplines, they promote each other and use each other as carriers, applying them to educated people of different ages, greatly increasing the interest in learning the subject, stimulating their interest in independent learning, and improving their character qualities and other aspects of their abilities, which are of great benefit. It has been a great benefit to them. Nowadays, there are not a few educators who apply English theatre performances to primary, junior high and senior high school students of this age group: for example, in

primary schools, the primary school takes the school-based English class as the main learning objective and incorporates theatre performances into the textbook English teaching so as to stimulate the interest of the class; in junior high schools, the junior high school takes the interest in enhancing the young people's interest in English learning or improving their spoken English as the main orientation and rehearses their works to participate in the English theatre competitions, etc.; and in senior high schools, the main focus is on the examination for further education and the incorporation of English theatre performance experiences to enrich the candidates' personal and personal development. In high school, the main focus is on the examination for higher education, and the English drama performance experience is added to enrich the candidates' personal history and find the direction of their future interest in learning; in undergraduate English drama performance teaching is closely connected with the general studies curriculum, and in order to help students enhance their memory, it is added to English literature and other disciplines as a way of class presentation, or the students create their own relevant clubs. As we can see, in the materials and articles, there are fewer arguments and practices of applying English theatre education to this particular period of early childhood education. As a practitioner, the author, through constant observation and reflection in the process of practice, has felt the demand for this inter-professional subject content in early childhood education, and realized the advantages and effectiveness of combining the two. Therefore, the author will elaborate on the ways and means of this direction, list certain theoretical bases, create a clearer classroom model, share the experience with educators, and add bricks and mortar to the education industry.

## **2. The Role of English Theatre Performance in Early Childhood Education "Supply and Demand Complementary"**

### **2.1. The "critical period of language acquisition" for preschoolers**

Based on the physiological foundation of preschool children, the theory of "critical period of language acquisition", between the ages of 2 and 11, the human brain can more easily carry out language learning. According to research, when children enter adolescence, the language function of the brain will gradually become "lateraled", i.e. the neurophysiology basis of the brain, which was originally used for language learning and comprehension, will gradually shift to the left side of the brain instead of the right and left side of the brain at the beginning. This means that preschool children are at an optimal time for language learning, as they have a higher level of language comprehension, perception, and acquisition. Therefore, if we start to let young children get in touch with the second language in this period of time, and create the learning environment and atmosphere of English language for them, it will enable them to learn English dynamically like their mother tongue, and get the improvement of spoken English more directly.

### **2.2. Strong Plasticity and Unconscious Learning in Early Childhood**

Learning in early childhood can help cultivate their interest in English. Studies in developmental psychology show that young children are sensitive to learning the intonation of a second language. Early childhood is the earliest stage in the development of human worldviews and values, and it is also an important stage in the development of human thinking skills and individual cognitive styles. It is also an important stage for the development of thinking skills and the gradual formation of personal cognitive styles. Therefore, this stage of early childhood development is highly malleable. Guided by English theatre performances, young children's attention and interest in this novelty will trigger their curiosity and imitation. Educators should take advantage of this to enter into the first exploration of children's theatre performance - performance begins with imitation. At the beginning of English theatre performance education, mobilize their special stage of spontaneous enthusiasm, independent learning, unconscious education and teaching behaviour in the most natural state.

### **2.3. Focus on the transmission of information such as expressions and body movements.**

The limitation of language makes children's classroom attention diverted. From Krashen's "Emotional Filtering Hypothesis", it is known that negative emotional factors such as anxiety and nervousness will filter language in the brain. Due to the language limitations of some young children, they may not be able to access the full range of instructions and contexts that the educator wants to convey in an English theatre performance classroom. Therefore, instead of relying on a single organ to receive information, young children are "forced" to carefully observe the educator's supportive vocabulary in order to comprehend the classroom content - Emotional expressions, body language, movement, touch perception, etc. The mobilization of young children's eyes,

hands, brain and other organs to jointly analyse the instructions of the thinking, in attracting attention at the same time, the educator also demonstrated some of the surface of the drama performance, to help young children to open up their own, as soon as possible to join the environment.

### **2.4. Multiple effects of theatre games born in the classroom**

The execution of theatre games helps young children quickly find a sense of control, and in the process generates benign contacts such as teacher-student exchanges, peer exchanges, and group interactions. Drama is born from play, and play comes from young children, so the importance of play for young children cannot be overstated. During the play session, some of the children who are new to English theatre performances will feel familiar with it, and it may even be relevant to their daily lives. After one or two successful play sessions, the children will be able to summarize the rules of the game and gain a sense of control over their new surroundings and characters, thus increasing their participation in the class. In the course of theatre games, the classroom hierarchy will be connected, and frequent interaction between people based on the rules of the game will help the children to become familiar with the unfamiliar, and help them to accept the classroom and integrate into the classroom. Drama games are often the most effective way to stimulate an individual's latent consciousness, and to deduce his or her personality and logical thinking through his or her actions. Therefore, through the reverse observation, educators can obtain the potential information of young children more quickly, so as to provide helpful guidance education for different young children.

## **3. The "Class Model" of English Drama Performance Education for Young Children**

### **3.1. Educator's concept of education**

#### **3.1.1. Interactive education**

Due to the special age of the target audience, the amount of "interaction and communication" that the educator needs to carry out in the classroom will be the same throughout. In early childhood, the ability to "listen" is much greater than the ability to "speak", which often comes from the ability to "listen". The ability to "speak" often comes from the ability to "listen". According to Palmer, a British expert in pedagogy, "Young children speak their own language only after a gestation phase." This stage is a long period of silence, in which the child will accumulate a certain amount of "heard" language, understand it and organize it before gradually developing the ability to "speak". In this stage, the educator should keep good patience, keep looking for the interest points and breakthroughs in the contact and observation, help the educated to accumulate, and encourage them to open their mouths to output behaviour.

#### **3.1.2. Learner-centred**

In the process of teaching English drama performance, on the basis of learner-centredness, not only individual differences but also cooperative learning should be emphasized. Take young children as the core and make them the masters of learning in the classroom. Drama activities advocate the participation of the whole body and mind in learning and multi-sensory input, and different educated

people tend to choose their own way of classroom learning. Educators should understand and observe the different personalities of educated people, experiment with different educational methods, and count the rules in the process of educational activities. Teach in a way that children are used to and familiar with, create a happy and lively classroom atmosphere, grasp the rhythm of the classroom, pay close attention, and always maintain the role of the third-party observer.

### **3.1.3. Educator's involvement**

The educator should wholeheartedly guide and participate in every classroom session of the educated, which is a very important part of English theatre performance teaching. The educator's participation will make the students feel a very important element of theatre - the sense of conviction: it will remove the important defence that they are too shy to express themselves, and strengthen their serious attitude towards the theatre scene and the role of the theatre. The educator's immersion in the theatre attracts the educated person to the classroom theatre activities, to the world of the theatre portrayed by the educator, where the relationship is relaxed, free of burdens and tensions. This kind of "immersion teaching" changes the atmosphere of the classroom, the teacher-student relationship and the power structure, and is more capable of bringing the two parties closer together and shortening the psychological distance in the traditional sense.

## **3.2. The establishment of the educational mechanism of the classroom ceremony**

### **3.2.1. Establishment of short instructions**

Due to the linguistic limitations of the education level in the early childhood stage, the instructions of the educator in the classroom when communicating in the text language should be short, clear, and explicit. The initial establishment of instructions can be carried out through physical movements, personal demonstrations and other non-textual language aids, and through repeated instructions and repeated reminders in the course of educational activities, so that the recipient accepts and develops a habit of forming a tacit understanding of the instructions belonging exclusively to both parties in the classroom. In addition to teaching instructions, discipline instructions, rest instructions and so on can have its corresponding mode, for both sides to accept and gradually accustomed to enhance the adhesion between teachers and students, to facilitate the management and teaching of the classroom.

### **3.2.2. Reward mechanism**

Liu Lei pointed out in "on the rewards in education", "man is directly a natural being, and thus man has the intrinsic demand to obtain the material rewards to maintain his life." In addition to this, "individuals are social beings, so they have the psychological need to obtain spiritual rewards such as a sense of social belonging." Thus it can be seen that the need for rewards is internally and objectively present in the process of development of the individual's life. The latter is preferred in the sphere of educational activity, where rewards are used in teaching and learning activities to give the recipient a sense of belonging, to improve his moral qualities and to stimulate his altruistic behaviour. Rewards in early childhood education can be used to discipline and regulate the behaviour of the learners, and better motivate them internally to move towards the set course. Therefore, in the classroom of early childhood education, the establishment of reward mechanisms favoured

by young children and the cultivation of a tacit classroom mechanism will yield twice the result with half the effort.

## **3.3. Classroom Setting**

### **3.3.1. Pre-class time**

Before the official start of the day's educational activities, educators should prepare the classroom content, tidy up their personal hygiene, dress neatly, and come to the educational venue about 10-15 minutes in advance for multimedia debugging, props preparation, venue temperature test, and clean the ground and other preparations.

In addition to preparing for teaching, the educator comes to the teaching site and spends about 5-10 minutes playing some basic games with the children in advance, such as drawing, block building, role-playing with toys, etc., to help the children get familiar with the space again, familiarize themselves with the rules of the curriculum, and establish the emotional bond between teachers and students, so that the subsequent teaching work to be carried out will go smoother, and to add transitional accompaniment to make the scenes and roles of the children switch more smoothly between the pre-course and the course. The added transitional accompaniment makes the scene and role switching between before and during the lesson smoother and less abrupt.

### **3.3.2. Warm-up games**

Warm-up games include a wide variety of games with different functions and purposes, and educators can choose them according to the ability and acceptance of the children being taught. For example, songs and dances, demonstrated by the educator with dancing and singing, quickly establish a cheerful and lively classroom atmosphere, through the double activation of the sense of hearing and body to help educated people quickly warm up and integrate into the curriculum; for example, co-operation, in the classroom when new members join the classroom, you can use such warm-up games to help new members to join the original team, to create a team spirit of honour in the classroom; for example, thinking, in the classroom at the beginning of the use of such warm-up games to stimulate the thinking ability of young children, for the class today, to stimulate the thinking ability of young children, and to create an environment for the children. For example, in the classroom, this kind of warm-up game can be used at the beginning of the class to stimulate the children's thinking ability and pave the way for today's teaching content.

Different warm-up games have different functions, and educators should follow the following points in the process of choosing their own: first, prepare warm-up games that are suitable for today's classroom within the scope of the children's ability and cognition; second, keep the warm-up games within 10-15 minutes, which can be adjusted according to the actual situation; third, when preparing the teaching content, prepare a number of plans, so that educators have room to adjust and adapt to the immediate classroom; third, when preparing the teaching content, prepare a number of plans, so that educators have room to adjust and adapt to the immediate classroom. Fourth, the warm-up game is related to the overall teaching content of the day, and the step-by-step progression facilitates children's thinking and learning in one context.

### **3.3.3. Developmental exercises**

Developmental exercises can be based on specific teaching purposes. For example, in the handcraft part, using colour painting, poster graffiti or props making and other handcrafts,

completing a piece of work individually or together, and applying it to the classroom, not only strengthens the use and development of the children's body and mind, but also enables the children to gain a sense of personal honour and achievement, improves class participation and focuses the children's attention. For example, improvisation exercises, through improvisation games and exercises, to explore the potential ideas of young children, improvisation frameworks and templates are mostly based on two categories: context and life communication. Young children's access to information is developing, and choosing a certain situation for practice can make young children feel familiar and controllable, so it is very important to create a fixed situation. Young children's thinking is based on image thinking, and starting through the entrance of their life interactions allows them to feel a strong connection between the classroom and the realities of life, without being cut off.

Developmental exercises are mostly aimed at dispersing young children's thinking and enhancing creativity and imagination. Like warm-up games, they can be executed using content from different artistic or disciplinary categories and can often be limited to 15-20 minutes. Unlike warm-ups, developmental exercises are a step above warm-ups in terms of purpose and need, leading children into the classroom content and experiencing the enhancement of children's thinking. The educator should accompany the children at all times, empathize with them, understand their thinking, observe them, make a summary of their patterns or personalities, and come up with practical and effective solutions.

#### **3.3.4. Classroom summary**

The educator uses the 5-7 minutes at the end of the class to conduct a review of the lesson, help integrate the content, and briefly describe the content of the next lesson. The educator does not make critical subjective evaluations of any behaviour in front of any young child, only educational guidance and evaluation for which the educator is responsible.

#### **3.3.5. Performance Orientation**

English drama performance courses are mostly class-based, and educators can design performances or plays as the final assessment or report orientation, so as to establish the class's "highest task", clarify the class's "course of action", enhance the class's "teamwork ability" and gain the class's "ability to work as a team". teamwork ability" and "sense of team honour".

#### **3.3.6. Parents' feedback after the class**

After the class, educators should communicate with the parents of the children, praising the children for their encouraging or praiseworthy parts, and providing timely feedback and exchange of information on any abnormalities or doubts of the children, so as to arrive at a solution efficiently and accurately.

## **4. The Practical Significance of English Theatre Performance in Early Childhood Education**

### **4.1. Stimulate young children's interest in learning English and improve their ability to use language comprehensively**

Drama is a comprehensive art, young children in the English drama performance process, through different angles

and ways of contact with literary works of art, unlike simply read aloud or recite, young children through the script research, character emotion speculation, line dialogue memory process, need to mobilize the body, expression and language, and other aspects of the individual function with. The learning process is no longer boring, but becomes interactive, the story jumps off the page, and the class is lively and interesting. During the process, the children accumulate the ability to use the language through "listening", the use of methods and other comprehensive use of language, stimulate the children's interest in learning English, and enhance the autonomy of learning.

### **4.2. Drawing on the excellent cultures of China and the West to enhance humanistic qualities in different dimensions**

Drama texts come in a wide variety of genres, from ancient to modern and from Chinese to foreign countries, including Shakespeare, Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales and other Western classics, as well as many familiar Chinese traditional stories, films, stage plays and musicals. In the process of studying and interpreting these plays, participants can not only discover the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures, but also experience life choices in the plays, improve their appreciation of literature and art, and enhance their humanistic qualities in different dimensions.

### **4.3. Experience the various emotions of the theatre characters and improve children's self-control**

In theatre performance, the characters need a certain degree of emotional understanding and emotional grasp of the performance of the storyline, which requires that young children first of all have a certain knowledge of their own emotions, but also to understand the reasons for the occurrence of emotions. Being able to try to learn to control one's own emotions is a very important life issue, and one that is difficult to learn through traditional educational methods. In the process of English drama performance, children will spontaneously see the development of the story, feel the joys and sorrows of the characters in the play, understand their emotions more deeply, and have a deeper understanding of themselves.

### **4.4. Enhance children's self-confidence and cultivate their empathy**

By releasing the energy of different organs of the body, children express themselves with their voices, bodies and languages on stage, and all the displays and blossoms in front of the stage will add courage and enhance their self-confidence through artistic means. There is another important ability that comes with English theatre performance, namely empathy. Children will gradually learn why and how to "put themselves in the shoes" of others, and theatre provides a safe and rewarding way for children to see areas and levels of the world that they have never been able to see before through the window of theatre.

### **4.5. Enhancement of independent and co-operative learning skills**

Theatre art is a team work, in addition to the individual efforts of the actors, more cooperation within the team, in this learning and rehearsal atmosphere, children will

unconsciously open the cooperation with other actors, after the play or report, as a cohesion of the team's sweat of the work of art will be for the children to bring an indescribable sense of collective honour, so as to enhance the children's ability to independent learning and cooperative learning ability. This enhances the children's ability to learn independently and cooperatively.

## 5. Conclusion

English theatre performance promotes children's learning and understanding of language and art, breaking through the traditional view of teachers, students and classrooms, and giving educators and recipients a new mode of teaching. Young children's strong plasticity, imitation ability, creativity, thought-provoking power, and comprehension are all unleashed in the teaching and learning activities of English theatre performances. Such strong interactive education draws everyone in the teaching venue closer to each other, creates a relaxed learning environment, and forms an active classroom atmosphere. In the practice of English drama performance classroom, the author is sincerely moved and gratified by seeing the growth and progress of the children and the perfect performance of the play.

Perhaps this is the most worthwhile and romantic moment of educators.

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