Teaching English Literature Through Popular Culture in China: Record and Reflection

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Classic English literature is high culture of a sort, too high for tertiary English majors in the 21st China, who have grown up with total exposure to popular culture in an electronic way, to reach so that they show indifference to literature class. To solve this problem, this paper intends to consider the implications and feasibilities of integrating popular culture into literature education in English departments of Chinese universities. After carefully reviewing the current English literature teaching connected with popular culture both in China and other parts of the world, this paper concludes that the choice of the popular culture texts shall be neither too random to include any form of popular culture nor too limited to only cover the film/TV adaptations of literary classics. Subsequently, the paper records the procedure and progress of the author's classic-literature and popular-culture class and reflects upon the students' substantial responses to the class. From the record and the reflection, three major findings are drawn: The students know little about how classic literature inspire popular culture and when they know, they become excited and want to know more; when further exploring those original texts which inspired their favourite pop, the students find themselves greatly challenged and stimulated as well; the students have strong desire to reach the "highness" of classic literature and would like to read challenging texts with their own spirits. A conclusion can be drawn from these findings: Both academic and popular literacy of English majors in Chinese universities should be enhanced, and it is workable to incorporate popular culture into literature classroom with careful preparations for classroom activities and guarantees of the smooth implements of these activities.

Keywords: literature teaching, classic literature, popular culture, high culture

Introduction

In the past years of the 21st century, the students who major in English in China's universities have become much impatient with English literature and they have attached much instrumental importance to English, so much so that the teachers and experts in English education in China become much upset and restless about the decline of intellectual rigour of English study in China. Sun Ni and Xie Jingqiu (2015) concluded that English literature teaching of higher education is faced with various difficulties under the influence of utilitarianism and mercantilist view after they investigate and review the studies on English literature teaching in China. Qu Weiguo (2012) worried and warned,

> The practical turn has already thrown many English departments in China into a deep crisis.… As a consequence, in some years' time, we may have an even larger crisis, when the English majors lose their competitiveness both with

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reference to their academic English abilities as well as their practical "real world" communicative skills. (p. 20)

To avoid suffering such consequences, *National Standards of Teaching Quality for Undergraduate English Majors* was enacted by the Ministry of Education of China in 2015, which is a normative and instructive document composed by the Chinese experts in the field of English study and teaching and has been further revised and carried out in 2019. According to the illustration given by Zhong Weihe (2015), one of the leading makers of the concerned document, the enhancement of English majors' humanistic quality shall be greatly emphasized and accomplished mainly by developing students' literary competence, as prescribed by *National Standards of Teaching Quality for Undergraduate English Majors* (p. 5). This indicates that the importance of literature education of Chinese English majors has been revived and much attention should be given to English literature classroom. Xu Qinghong and Qi Tao (2012) appealed for its own position that English literature should be replaced to and they argued that the innovation of literary teaching and research should be oriented by literature's ontological features. However, in reality, it is still very struggling for the teachers of English literature to drag the students from their indulgence in the instrumental function of and practical needs for English. The Chinese English majors are still indifferent to literature courses and regard these courses as either too difficult or too distant from the real business world. So, it is highly urgent to create innovative approaches to teaching literature to Chinese English majors.

In the English education of Chinese English majors, incorporating English culture into teaching English literature is always well-accepted and implemented by the mainstream English teachers. Dong Hongchuan (1993) suggested that in teaching English literature, the cultural factors should be educed from a given literary text and the connotations of those cultural factors in English should be differentiated from those in Chinese, so that the students can understand the given literary text much better. Dong's argument is very typical of many Chinese English teachers and scholars who teach English cultures through English literature on the condition that culture is inherent of literature and English literature shall be treated as a branch of English cultural system. But this method just tackles the internal relationship between literature and culture and thus emphasizes teaching the innate culture of a given literary text. Teaching culture out of literature cannot help thaw the coldness of Chinese English majors to English literature, the canonical texts on the curricula in particular, which are thought of so out of date and out of reach by the concerned students who would rather engage themselves into English songs, English games, English television dramas, or English films and view these popular things as far easier accesses to English culture and practical means to improve their English proficiency. Since the students are completely exposed to and greatly interested in these popular things, why not take these into the literature classroom? In other words, why do we not teach English literature through English popular culture? Why can we not juxtapose popular culture with so-called high-art literature rather than emphasizing the internality of culture into literature too much and vulgarity of popular culture too much? Instead, why can we not treat popular culture as a certain stimulus for the students to explore the canonical texts and enjoy the real beauty of the original literary work in person?

To put into practice this idealized literature classroom, we had better name a literature course specifically—Classic Literature and Popular Culture, which intends to teach English literary classics through popular culture, such as English songs, games, sports, and televisions and films as well. To put into control this "gigantic" teaching project, we had better testify its theoretical feasibility by systemizing the relationship between English canon and popular culture within the theoretical framework of cultural criticism. Plainly

speaking, we have to theoretically define the two terms—popular culture and classic literature. Another term that we should define is the literature classroom and its goal. We will put these definitions into practice and then faithfully record the teaching procedure of the first semester and reflect upon the students' responses to it so as to see how far we can go on the way of teaching English literature through popular culture.

The Role of Literature in English Classroom

The first step to tackle the problem is make it clear what role literature plays in the classroom, which is generally decided by the teacher's conception of teaching literature. Sunardi Akil, Arafah, and Salijia (2018) concluded that literature is conceptualized by English literature teachers in terms of three main strands—literature, language, and literacy—and thus English literature offers teachers reasonable options for teaching language. Their research argues for the utilization of literature in the English language education. This argument reminds us of the basic difference between teaching a second language as an instrument of communication and teaching the same language, so that the student can appreciate literature, as so raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2012) when exploring the double binds in the aesthetic education of universities students learning English as a foreign language. This difference leads to the difference between the language classroom and literature classroom, as Spivak (2012) continued there, and the goal in the former is "an active and reflexive use of the mechanics of the language" while the goal in the latter is "at least to shape the mind of the student so that it can resemble the mind of the so-called implied reader of the literary text, even when that is a historically distanced cultural fiction" (p. 36). The very last four words of this quote hint another classroom concerning the role of literature in English teaching—the culture classroom, where English culture is taught by reading literary texts on the hypothesis that literature is one carrier of a national culture.

Both in the language classroom and in the culture classroom, literature serves as a means rather than an end. But literature should do much more to meet the demands of enhancing the humanistic quality of Chinese English majors. The markers of humanistic quality include the ability to enjoy literature aesthetically and analyze it critically, and therefore, in a certain sense, the English language education shall serve as a means to English literature teaching and learning rather than the reverse. So, a substantial review will be given to the researches carried out by the English scholars in China and abroad to see the operations of the literature classroom where literature is treated as an end rather than a means and find out the feasibility of teaching English literature through popular culture.

Integrating popular culture into the literature classroom requires the clear definition both of popular culture and classic literature and then the incorporative relation between the two. With the confusion of these terms cleared out, the class design can be framed with the cutting-edge effect and lesson studies can smoothly set about. The experiment of teaching English literature through popular culture was first carried out as part of "Key Curricula Construction Project of Tianjin University of Finance and Economics" in 2016. The course then was named as "Classic Literature and Adaptations" and given to a 20-student English major class as a limited optional course in the concerned university. The course had been taught for 16 weeks with 90 minutes each week and eventually proven a success since the students' interests in literary classic had been great aroused. It had been given to another English major class in 2017 to enforce the course construction. Then, the teaching plan and design of the course was revised and amended and the name was changed to "Classic Literature and Popular Culture" and has been given to all the English major classes of third-year students in the fall semester of 2018. In the discussion section of this paper, the teaching procedure of one of these classes was recorded

lively and observed critically as a sample classroom, so as to check how efficiently English literature can be taught through popular culture. This record-reflection methodology has been inspired by Praxis-Reflective Qualitative Research in Education carried out in the School of Education, Peking University (Chen, 2010).

The Tension Between Academic Reading and Reading for Pleasure

It is generally taken for granted that what teachers care is literature, a high culture, but what students care is popular culture, such as songs, television series, or movies. So, the tension arises between academic reading and reading for pleasure. Before the tension is settled, we need to figure out what high culture and popular culture really mean. Buhmann, Hellmueller, and Bossahrt (2015) claimed that high culture is produced and consumed by elites while popular culture is consumed by large majorities. John Storey (2012) pointed out the annihilation of the distinction between high culture and popular culture. "The main point to insist on here is the claim that postmodern culture that no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture" (p. 12). For the definition of popular culture, Storey (2012) admitted the openness of popular culture as a term which can be defined according to the context of use. "For it must be remembered that popular culture is not a historically fixed set of popular texts and practices, nor is it a historically variable, and always in part constructed by the very act of theoretical engagement" (p. 14).

Herbert Gans (1999) gave a more specific definition which

> encompasses only the practices, goods, and ideas classified broadly under the arts (including literature, music, architectures and design, etc., and the products of all other print media, electronic media, etc.), whether used for education and aesthetic and spiritual enlightenment or for entertainment and diversion. (p. 2)

Gans (1999) also suggested that literature broods readers' higher taste but requires education and formal training while such training is less important in popular culture, such as popular music. Does this indicate that in teaching English literature through popular culture, little time should be spent in training students' taste for popular culture, so as to much more time can be taken to train students' taste on literature?

Introducing popular culture into the literature classroom, we shall not highlight the class attribute of popular culture or the elitism of literature for fear that the students may feel despised for their preferences to popular culture and thus resent literature, the so-called high culture. The real intention of teaching literature through popular culture is to guide the students to recognize and experience the impact of classic literature on popular culture and thus fall into love with classic literature. So, the clear-cut definition given by Tim Delaney (2007) is a proper one like this, "popular culture may be defined as *the products and forms of expression and identity that are frequently encountered or widely accepted, commonly liked or approved, and characteristic of a particular society at a given time*" (p. 2, italicized in the original).

In teaching English literature through popular culture, it is still inevitable to make a scope of English literature, i.e., which literary texts are feasible to be taught in such an innovative literature classroom. In a broad sense, the literary texts chosen into this literature classroom shall be canonical as illustrated by Harold Bloom (1995) who emphasized the aesthetic value of literary classics when he justifies the literary canon. "One breaks into the canon only by aesthetic strength, which is constituted primarily on an amalgam: mastery of figurative language, originality, cognitive power, knowledge, exuberance of diction" (pp. 27-28). To identify and gain such aesthetic strength in a literary work is the ultimate objective of teaching English literature to Chinese English majors. Or simply, the classic texts taken in the literature classroom would be selected from a

collection of syllabi for English literature survey classes at Chinese universities. This is inspired by Sarah Corse's (1995) who decisively made her choice of canonical works from the university syllabi. Her choice indicates that literary works on the syllabi of a country's colleges and universities are authoritatively acknowledged as national canon worthy of teaching to the young people of the country. Arthur Krystal (2014) roughly explained how literary canon entered the university syllabi in the U.S. when he defends the canon against a new definition of literature "in which case maps, sermons, comic strips, cartoons, speeches, photographs, movies, war memorials, and music all huddle beneath the literary umbrella" (p. 89). Krystal (2014) intended to drive away popular culture things from high-culture literature and protect the canon from being meddled by popular things. But in reality, not only many canonical works were "popular" in their own time but also popular culture always pays homage to the canon by borrowing things from the canonical works, just as Gans (1999) observed:

> The second theme of the mass culture critique includes two charges: that popular culture borrows content from high culture with the consequence of debasing it; and that, by offering economic incentives, popular culture is able to lure away potential high culture creators, thus impairing the quality of high culture. (p. 26)

These charges will be closely examined in the innovative literature classroom where the chosen texts of popular culture have covertly or overtly borrowed from certain canonical, which is the key point of teaching English literature through popular culture.

Is teaching literature through popular culture a compromise that the teachers make with Chinese English majors who attach great importance to the instrumental function? Is it a reconciliation between "high-taste literature" and "low-taste popular culture"? Or is it a smart choice of teaching the out-of-date-and-out-of-reach canon in the "smart" age? Yes, it is, in some sense. Song Xiaoqing (2016) suggested that to overcome the disadvantages in the traditional mode of literature teaching and to motivate the students' enthusiasm about literary classics, teachers should guide the students to make the best use of the network resources under the big data environment to read the classical and famous works, so that the students can improve their humanities. To play the film adaptation of a literary classic is the major method of making the best use of the network suggested by Song (2016), who claimed that the students can watch the adaptations on their smart phones or ipad and then make their own adaptations into Flash videos to show in the classroom. Song is not the only one who teaches English canon through their screen adaptations. Wang Songlin and Li Hongqin (2003) even emphasized the literariness of the film adaptations of classic literature and held that a given film adaptation should be "read" as independent text in teaching English literature. However, the relevance of popular culture to classical literature is not just the screen adaptation. And other problems will arise if too much importance is attached to and too much emphasis is placed on the screen adaptations of English cannon in the literature classroom. On the one hand, the film/TV adaptation of a classical text has not had just one version but many versions. It is impossible to cover most of the versions in the limited class hours, not to mention all the versions. On the other hand, if every literary text is taught through its screen adaptation, such a teaching mode is fixed and very soon the students will lose enthusiasm. Just as Sun Yanna (2013) pointed out, for one thing, the limited class hours of literature teaching make it impossible to make the best of the screen adaptations of classical literature; for another, the visualization/audialization of the screen adaptations rid English literature of its reading aesthetics and deprive the students of their rights to challenge the canonical texts.

At the same time, teaching English literature through popular culture must be distinguished from teaching

English language through literature in EFL classroom, because for the latter literature is taken as reading material for proficiency in English whereas the former always regards literature as its ultimate object. Sanju Choudhary (2016) claimed at the very end of his concerned paper that "literature can be used by teachers of English in making their language teaching more effective and dynamic" and English literature can be exploited as language tool in ELT classroom. Roberta Cimarosti (2015), teaching English in the University of Venice, argued that literature is taken as reading material for not only proficiency in English language but also global-cultural awareness. This reveals the prevalence of taking English literature as a means or tool to teach culture as well as language. Khosravi, Moharami, and Mehdi (2014) illustrated the achievements EFL learners can make in learning English culture by reading certain literary texts and watching their filmic adaptations.

In teaching literature through popular culture, literature is undoubtedly taken as an end and popular culture is a means. And when literature is taken as an end in the classroom,

> tertiary students majoring in English as a foreign language and literature not only require an acceptable entry level of grammatical accuracy and awareness of the situational appropriateness of language use from literary texts, but must develop the evaluative skills to aesthetically and critically appreciate and analyze literary works, (p. 272)

as Mekala (2009, as cited in Cui & Gleeson, 2015) states. Aesthetic enjoyment and critical analysis shall be the ultimate objectives of teaching English literature through popular culture. But what really matters is "how to" reach these objectives before arousing students' interest in and aspiration to reading English literature. So far, only two essays have been found closely related and highly inspiring to teaching literature through popular culture. Linda Dryden (2002), exploring the variety of ways that *Heart of Darkness* by Conrad has been used in popular culture, suggested that there is a broader interdependence between popular culture and some of valued literary products and argued that popular culture can be dependent upon the most valued literature for its very content while the canonized work gains greater power through its reworking in another medium. Melissa Page (2012) hailed the significance of teaching English literature *with* rather than *through* popular culture which suggests that popular culture be taught altogether with literature no matter whether popular culture texts are relevant to any literary classics or not. In this circumstance, the choice of popular texts is random, as Page stated,

> popular culture texts include any medium that conveys a message requiring the negotiation, or reading, of meaning: messages conveyed through, but not limited to, music, film, television, advertisements, the Internet, social networking tools such as digital handheld devices, fan fiction, comics, and graphic novels. (p. 129)

Such a random choice makes the reading/teaching material too sprawling to handle for the EFT literature classroom. To be effective and efficient but also always in control, both the choice of popular culture texts and that of classic literature shall follow a certain criterion and procedure, and therefore, teaching literature *through* rather than *with* popular culture indicates both criterion and procedure: A popular culture text shall be relevant to a canonical text, i.e., the former somewhat borrows things from the latter and the latter has once produced impacts on the former.

Findings

From the well-developed documents of tackling the relationship between classic literature and popular culture, particularly that in the literature classroom, we can see the feasibility and the key point of teaching literature through popular culture. A chosen popular culture text is an access to a canonical text and reading

popular culture texts serves as a means to teaching classic literature. The following is a classroom sample recording the procedure of such a teaching.

After a brief introduction to the two terms in the course title, I started the class with two popular culture texts. The first is a video clip taken from Episode 1 Season 1 of *Boardwalk Empire*, a very popular American TV drama among young Chinese audience. Here are the lines in the video clip I played to the students:

—Enough with the bohunk cracks.

—My name's Doyle now.

—What?

—I changed it. I ain't Mickey Cusick no more.

—Who's after you?

—Nobody.

—Then why Doyle?

—It sounds better, is all.

—A rose by any other name.

—What's that supposed to mean?

—Read a fucking book.

When I asked the students who had ever seen *Boardwalk Empire*, more than half of 24 students handed up. I then asked whether any line from the video clip reminded you of a literary classic. No one handed up this time! I dropped it and moved on to the second example, an article from *The New Yorker*, the June-18-2018 issue with a title "Harry Kane and a Tale of Two Englands" by Alan Burdick. I asked who had watched the 2018 World Cup of Footfall, all the six boys and two girls in the class handed up. And I asked whether any one was England fan. No one! But I still asked my question "Does the title of the article remind you of any English novel?" One girl answered very tentatively: *A Tale of Two Cities*? I relieved a little bit and the students began to warm themselves up. I heated the class with another example—"Moon River", a classic English song, asking whether they knew "my huckleberry friend" in the song was related to *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. The students knew the novel but not the song! I suggested they use their smart phones to Google the relevance of the song to *Breakfast at Tiffany* and to the novel. They became exhilarated by playing with the phones to do classwork. After that, they read the handouts containing the quotes from Dryden (2002):

> Further, the literature produced in previous eras in a constant process of reinterpretation by new generations of readers who are themselves affected by the prevailing cultural climate. In the process, new meanings are wrung out of texts that have long been analyzed by students and critics alike. When these texts enter into our cultural lives, therefore, it cannot be assumed that the meanings they contain are fixed and immutable. Rather, meaning is dependent upon context, so that if we remove a line from a work of literature and place it within a new context, some of its original meaning will be lost; some of it may persists, but most importantly, new and sometimes conflicting meanings will accrue around it. (p. 151)

With the three given examples, we discussed the quotes and concluded that the canon of great books always nurtures popular culture, and to entertain popular culture with "high taste", we shall aesthetically enjoy and critically analyze literary classics. Then, I ended the class with a homework instruction and a suggestion of reading *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. The homework was intended to check whether the students knew for sure the real intention of the course. The homework was a group work with free grouping; the task for each group was to figure out the impact(s) of an English canonical text on popular culture and then make a theme poster showing their findings.

So, the second class was a Poster-Game one: We had seven groups each with three or four members and a very colorful and impressive poster with drawing and picture-pasting; all the seven posters were put on the classroom walls and in turn each group illustrated their findings to other groups. Only four groups hit the point and the other three only showed films or songs which had nothing to do with any canonical texts. In other words, those three groups failed to catch the real intention of the course—going through popular culture to reach classic literature. One of the four "successful" groups loosely completed the task—they illustrated "When You are Old" by William Butler Yeats and two songs adapted from the poem. The second of the four groups was about Sherlock Holms, a fictional detective in the detective fiction by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This group argued that Doyle's detective fiction was not high culture in his own time but it has become classics and inspired many other arts and artists across the world and the group further questioned why such "popular culture" could be listed into the English canon. I encouraged this group to do further research on their questions by offering a reading list of cultural criticism. The poster of the third group was the closest to the course essence—they focused on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare and its inspiring powers on popular culture: *Arena of Valor*, a popular online game designed by Tencent Games, Van Cleef & Arpels, a French jewelry brand, and Galatea Bridal, a wedding dress brand, have all borrowed things from the comedy. The last group showed how Jane Austen and her *Pride and Prejudice* have inspired popular culture in the 20th and 21st century and the group's particular interest was *Stride and Prejudice*, a Parkour game created by one of Jane Austen's fans. This poster attracted and impressed other groups quite a lot because of its illustration of how to play the game—a player has to navigate Elizabeth Bennet to move among the words or sentences from the original novel, which indicates that one has to know the novel very well if one wants to win the game. The findings of this group really amazed me because the intention of this game is the intention of teaching English literature through popular culture, to stimulate students to read and appreciate an English canonical text *via* a certain popular culture text!

With this poster-game class, I once again cautioned my students that reading popular culture is our approach to reading English literary classics with aesthetic enjoyment and critical analysis. In the following four weeks, we came back to the two of three examples given in the first class. First, we studied *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* and ended it with a 500-word essay assigned to the students exploring the meaning of "a rose by any other name" in that *Boardwalk Empire* scene. Two-third of the essays was passionately written while the rest made little sense. Then, we studied *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* and held a small debate class on the possible meanings of "huckleberry friend" in "Moon River". Most students agreed on running away together to see the world, seeking freedom together, or the old happy days in boyhood/girlhood whereas a boy student complained it is stupid relating the song to the novel because the novel is not that romantic but very realistic and critical of the cruel adult world. After Romeo, Julietm, and Huckleberry, we moved forward to Heathcliff and Catherine. First, I asked the same seven groups of the students as in the poster-game class to investigate how *Wuthering Heights* inspired popular culture and their investigations were like this: All the seven groups figured out so many film/TV adaptations of the novel, one group of which had drawn a linear map listing and marking all the British/American film/TV adaptations from 1930s to 2018, another group focused on the foreign adaptations of this English novel, say, Indian, Italian and particularly Japanese film, TV, opera adaptations, and still another group found out lots of detailed information about English singer-song writer Kate Bush and her fame song of "Wuthering Heights". And then, I asked each group to see one film adaptation and write a review analyzing to what degree the adaptation is faithful to the original novel on the condition of

reading the novel thoroughly. The seven reviews were presented in the class and the most impressive reviews were the ones of 1939 English adaption directed by William Wyler and 1988 Japanese Adaptation directed by Yoshishige Yoskhida, which argued that the two adaptations accurately caught and successfully rendered the essence of the original in different ways. When we continued to study *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, we focused on the comparison between the novel and its 2013 film adaptation directed by Baz Luhrmann, where we emphasized the novel rather than the film, avoiding involving serious media studies too much and too many relevant terms in the discussion.

In our discussions of literary classics and their involvement in popular culture, two paralleled paradigms have been carried out to guide our reading and analysis. Still a bridge has been made for our discussion to loom back and forth from one paradigm to the other. The first paradigm is set by Bloom (1995), which describes what a canonical text should be like: "mastery of figurative language, originality, cognitive power, knowledge, exuberance of diction" (pp. 27-28). Each of these five items/criteria must be explored and analyzed and then pinned down in teaching each canonical text as those mentioned in the previous paragraph. By exploring and pinning down these items, we intend to catch the essence or spirit of a given canonical text. Such terms as "essence" and "spirit" are the essential ones defined and employed by critics of adaption studies, such as Yvonne Griggs (2016). Griggs's studies on the canon adaptation make our second paradigm with which we discuss the impacts of a given canonical text on popular culture: the classic treatment, re-visioning the text, a radical rethink, the relationship between the classic text and its adaptations (genealogical model, sunburst model, daisy chain model, and tracer model) (pp. 258-265). But we would not go too far in exploring those adaptations since our focus is always on the original text. We follow Griggs paradigm only to the degree whether the adaptations embody the essence or spirit of the original text we have pinned down.

Through the whole course, my students have been inclined for the concerned popular culture texts rather than the canonical texts themselves. From the poster game class, we can see that more than half of the students were at loss what the real intention of the course. Even after they knew the canonical source of a given pop text, they had been impatient with the canonical text, and in the discussion/debate classes, they referred to the adaptations much more than the original texts. This is a striking problem in teaching literature through popular culture. To lead the students into the original texts and its beauty and power, the teacher has to emphasize the key of the classroom activity is to argue for/against the fidelity of the adaptations to the originals rather than to review the adaptations. And also an observation form has to be made to assess the argumentative validity by scoring the extent to which the views are presented with the evidence from the original text.

Another problem is the choice of pop texts involved in the literature classroom. The choice shall be neither as random as any text can be taken to the literature classroom nor as limited as to the screen adaptation of a canonical text. A pop text shall be closely relevant to a certain canonical text and the teacher shall guide the students to explore the impacts of English canon on English popular culture but the focus shall always be on the aesthetic enjoyment and critical analysis of the canonical text, because popular culture is taken as an approach to literature teaching and it serves as a means in the literature classroom.

Conclusion

In the second decade of this century, cultural criticism tends to annul the distinction between high culture and popular culture and the canon has been stepping or dragged out of their literary shrines and involved deeply and widely into popular culture, and in order to shake off its own so-called "vulgarity", popular culture exerts

itself to borrow more and more from high culture, literary canon in particular. On the other hand, the ferocious network technology makes popular culture much more popular—digital handheld devices make young people ferocious consumers of popular culture, among whom are Chinese English majors and different in the purpose of consuming English popular culture. In other words, Chinese English majors are more concerned about English popular culture, since they attach much instrument importance to English as a language and are eager to improve their English proficiency very quickly. They watch English television drama, enjoy English songs, see English films, and read English newspapers/magazines on various Apps as well. They think those English are more real and thus more useful than the English in the canonical texts. They neither know nor care that English, as an academic subject, belongs to humanities and that their English proficiency cannot be quintessentially consolidated unless they get through English literature.

All the above factors hinder, and at the same time, offer some new possibilities for, the literature education of Chinese English major. "Hypnotized, distracted, hungry for exaltation: consumers of popular culture pose a threat no so much because of what they consume, but because of the way they consume it" (Miller, 2003, p. 126). This is what Richard Miller (2003) argued when introducing popular culture into literature classroom. If we quote Miller (2003) further, the intention of such a literature classroom becomes clearer.

> By reconceiving the classroom as a site where popular and academic literate practices are placed in dialogue with one another, rather than as the place where popular literate practices are cast aside, the important work of education gets redefined not as a process of eradication but as an ongoing act of negotiation between competing desires and concerns. (p. 138)

Introducing popular culture into literature classroom and emphasizing the impact of canonical texts on popular culture may not be the best solution to the problem that Chinese English majors are indifferent to and ignorant of literature, but its advantages and benefits are obvious. "This mixing of texts, both literary classics and popular culture, encourages more reading, writing, and critical thinking than would limiting students to a rigidly defined canon" (p.131), so did Page (2012) argue for the introduction of popular culture into literature classroom.

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