

The Flipped Classroom as a Pedagogical Strategy for Piano Improvisational Accompaniment

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Abstract: *In recent years, as China's educational reform has progressively deepened, numerous innovative teaching models have emerged. Among these, the flipped classroom pedagogical approach has attracted increasing scholarly and professional attention. Concurrently, the development of piano improvisational accompaniment instruction within higher education institutions has also advanced considerably. This area of study not only cultivates the fundamental ability of music majors to align melodies with harmonies but also provides essential career preparation for students. Those pursuing this specialization acquire foundational knowledge, theoretical understanding, and practical skills in improvisational accompaniment, receive systematic training in harmonic theory and piano practice, and gradually develop proficiency in piano improvisational accompaniment performance. Furthermore, they cultivate the pedagogical competencies necessary for music educators, with the overarching goal of preparing applied talents capable of excelling in both music performance and music teaching. This article provides a concise introduction to the educational functions, practical foundations, and specific application strategies of piano improvisational accompaniment theory within contemporary teaching models. It aims to offer necessary theoretical support for further research on piano improvisational accompaniment courses in higher education institutions.*

Keywords: Flipped classroom; Piano; Improvisational accompaniment.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a comprehensive subject, piano improvisation accompaniment course requires performers not only to have strong basic knowledge of music theory and harmony, but also to have high abilities in harmony arrangement and piano performance. In order to firmly cultivate advanced applied talents needed by society, as a teacher, we should start from cultivating students' comprehensive piano improvisation accompaniment level, help them solve the difficulties of practice and the learning dilemma of "high eyes but low hands", regulate students' learning emotions and teaching atmosphere, and enable them to practice in a comfortable, free, and casual manner. Therefore, this requires teachers to change traditional teaching modes and methods, appropriately integrate flipped classrooms, combine knowledge theory, focus on cultivating students' practical abilities, and comprehensively improve the effectiveness of students' improvisation accompaniment.

Piano improvisational accompaniment is a fundamental skill in music education, requiring students to integrate technical proficiency, harmonic knowledge, creative spontaneity, and practical adaptability. Traditionally, instruction in this area has relied heavily on teacher-centered demonstrations and in-class practice sessions, often leaving insufficient time for individualized feedback and the development of students' creative autonomy. The flipped classroom pedagogical model, which reverses the conventional sequence of instruction by delivering theoretical content outside of class and reserving in-person sessions for interactive, application-focused activities, presents a promising alternative. This study explores the application of the flipped classroom model to piano improvisational accompaniment instruction, examining its potential to enhance both learning outcomes and student engagement. The research involves the design and implementation of a flipped instructional framework, in which students engage with pre-class materials—including video lectures, harmonic analysis tutorials, and model accompaniment examples—before attending in-person sessions dedicated to hands-on practice, peer collaboration, and individualized instructor feedback. Drawing on data from classroom observations, student performance assessments, and reflective surveys, the study evaluates the effectiveness of this approach in fostering students' improvisational fluency, theoretical understanding, and creative confidence. Preliminary findings suggest that the flipped classroom model not only optimizes the use of instructional time but also encourages deeper cognitive engagement and greater student autonomy. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on innovative pedagogies in music education and offers practical guidance for educators seeking to enhance the teaching of improvisational accompaniment skills.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE BASIC THEORY OF PIANO IMPROVISATIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Piano improvisational accompaniment refers to the arrangement and creation of a piece of music based on the performer's sensitivity to the melody, combined with the style and scene of the piece, under the condition of having knowledge of music theory and harmony. It has characteristics such as flexibility and innovation.

The high-level improvisation mode is not limited by a fixed mode in essence, and can integrate one's own thoughts and rhythms. It does not require strict adherence to the music score for performance, but can also be combined with the performance situation for expression, freely adding one's own elements, flexibly using or adjusting notes, in order to present a more natural and vivid stage effect. However, improvisation often requires a high level of basic piano theory and playing skills, as well as extremely high psychological qualities and on-site emergency capabilities, in order to perform improvisation and achieve certain effects.

Combining the practical requirements of piano improvisation accompaniment for learners' piano foundation, harmony foundation, and music literacy, in order to further improve the actual effectiveness of piano improvisation teaching in universities and break the constraints of such requirements on college students' improvisation accompaniment learning, it is necessary to innovate and reform the existing teaching mode. With the help of current new electronic technology, we provide students with sufficient materials for pre class preparation, in class explanations, and post class exercises, including videos, audios, etc., so that students can make full use of their spare time, practice and learn efficiently, and use current hot information and real-time policies to stimulate students' interest and provide technical support for teaching effectiveness.

3. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF PIANO IMPROVISATION ACCOMPANIMENT TEACHING IN CHINA

3.1 Students' initiative is not high

During the university stage, students often do not attach importance to learning efficiency. Our school's piano improvisation accompaniment courses are mainly taught in large classes and returned to class, resulting in poor student autonomy and uneven student levels. Moreover, university piano courses are mostly taught by teachers, which leads to the long-term neglect of the main position of university students. In this situation, it is not conducive to the cultivation of independent innovation ability of university students, nor is it conducive to future employment development. In addition, once university students are neglected by teachers for a long time, they will lack a strong interest in teaching work, thus unable to deeply cultivate relevant professional qualities, and ultimately affect the pace of relevant teaching reform.

3.2 Lack of talent in the teaching team

At present, there is a high demand for piano improvisation accompaniment teachers in music teaching positions in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools in China. Vocal and piano teachers need to have a certain level of piano improvisation accompaniment ability. However, the total number of piano improvisation accompaniment teachers is relatively small, which seriously affects the development of music professional teaching. Secondly, some piano teachers in colleges and universities lack professional skills, and there are problems with teaching methods and teaching formats, resulting in low improvisational accompaniment ability of students.

3.3 Inadequate infrastructure

In some universities, due to funding constraints or key issues, there is not much investment in piano education, which results in a failure to provide high-quality hardware infrastructure. Piano or electric steel may be in short supply, leading to insufficient facilities for piano improvisation accompaniment courses. Teachers lack specialized educational equipment or tools to impart professional knowledge to students, directly resulting in low teaching quality.

4. THE DIRECTION AND PRINCIPLES OF USING FLIPPED CLASSROOM IN PIANO AND IMPROVISATIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT COURSES IN UNIVERSITIES

4.1 The widespread use of flipped classroom in college piano improvisation accompaniment courses

Lenin once said: We should not blindly read and memorize, we should use basic scientific knowledge to develop and enhance the critical thinking ability of every user. This is also very applicable in college piano improvisation accompaniment courses, so the first step should be to cultivate users' independent learning ability as the guide, and carry out appropriate flipped teaching work. By fully mobilizing users' subjective motivation, students can consciously immerse themselves in the process of piano thinking and analysis, so that they can complete piano improvisation accompaniment practice with a highly engaged mental state, further consolidating their basic piano skills. Secondly, it is necessary to integrate the concept of cooperative teaching, set cooperation goals for college students, so that they can refine their responsibilities through cooperative methods, learn from others' strengths, and overcome their own shortcomings, in order to further cultivate their team consciousness on the basis of improving their piano improvisational accompaniment quality. In addition, as piano performance is ultimately an art rather than a skill, universities should focus on cultivating students' instrumental skills and further develop their instrumental thinking abilities.

4.2 The principle of flipped classroom is also widely used in college piano improvisation accompaniment courses

According to the flipped classroom mode and the characteristics of piano improvisation accompaniment, the three principles of student-centered, personalized guidance, and process monitoring must be implemented in the classroom teaching process. In terms of the principle of putting students first, the constructivist theory of education holds that college students should rely on their inherent cognitive system in the process of practical teaching, and consciously master educational theoretical knowledge through interaction and influence with the external environment. According to the flipped classroom teaching theory, when teachers carry out classroom teaching work, they should give the initiative of seeking knowledge to college students and attach importance to their special status as the subject of teaching, so as to fully exert the auxiliary guidance function of teachers. From the perspective of individualized guidance principles, influenced by factors such as the family environment, upbringing background, and personality of middle school students, college students often exhibit significant personalized differences and diverse learning directions. Therefore, college teachers should use individualized guidance methods to effectively teach students according to their individual differences and diverse characteristics.

5. HOW TO INTEGRATE FLIPPED CLASSROOM TEACHING METHODS INTO PIANO IMPROVISATION ACCOMPANIMENT COURSES

5.1 Design self-directed learning tasks based on individual differences among students

The core concept of the broad teaching mode is to fully mobilize the main motivation of college students and enable them to freely engage in the piano learning process. Therefore, teachers can develop self-directed learning task books based on the basic needs of piano performers for piano quality during improvisational performances of piano songs, and tailor them to the personalized differences of college students. In our school, different gradient and difficulty task books can be set up for students majoring in vocal music (bel canto or pop singing) and piano direction. Due to the different interests of vocal direction, bel canto and pop students in exploring different songs, learning task books for different song styles can be established; Piano students, due to their overall high level of playing, can set up more technically challenging and difficult repertoire learning task books; Cross directional design learning tasks can also be conducted in different directions. In the designed task book, it is divided into three parts: learning guidance ideas, learning tasks, and suggestions. At the same time, appropriate resources are provided to enable college students to ultimately understand the basic knowledge of harmony and the practical way of arranging piano accompaniment through self-study after class and work. In addition, it is necessary to propose a specific practice plan in the design task, which must include the performance arrangement of demonstration songs on the one hand, and also integrate the performance arrangement of new songs on the other hand, so as to accumulate accompaniment experience in a more practical way and further improve the accompaniment strength of the band. When arranging new music accompaniment, piano teachers often need to provide college students

with necessary skill improvement in their teaching task book, and propose possible methods to prevent college students from developing corresponding resistance to improvisational accompaniment due to confusion.

5.2 Form a self-directed learning team to achieve complementary roles among college students

The establishment of self-directed learning teams is mainly to fully mobilize the main motivation of college students, so that team members can supervise and interact with each other in the process of self-directed learning.

Therefore, educators can divide college students into several multi person teams based on their basic piano skills, usually consisting of six to eight members, and select a leader from the group members to manage their daily self-directed learning groups. In the process of setting goals for self-directed learning team members, educators need to pay special attention to the cooperation of students, ensuring that each group can cooperate with members with strong abilities and solid piano skills, so as to play a leading role. Based on this, college students can not only think independently, but also handle specific accompaniment arrangements through group discussions and exchanges. At the same time, disadvantaged college students can actively absorb and learn from other perspectives, thereby further consolidating their piano accompaniment foundation and forming a specialized accompaniment arrangement knowledge system.

5.3 Fully utilize the on campus platform and strengthen pre class preview guidance

In addition to encouraging students to use their spare time for self-directed learning activities, teachers must also do a good job in pre class preparation and guidance, creating more abundant online learning resources for students, so that they can make good use of their spare time to carry out their studies. Through the flipped teaching theory, teachers can provide college students with a large amount of learning materials for micro course textbooks before class, accurately grasp the core knowledge points of the textbooks based on their own teaching experience, and then apply modular processing to limit the time limit of each micro course teaching resource to five to ten minutes, in order to prevent college students from feeling bored due to long time limits and scattered knowledge points.

In the actual preparation and guidance process for teaching, teachers generally need to establish three stages of micro course teaching resources, which involve theoretical analysis of harmony knowledge, the arrangement of harmony guidance plans based on the full melody, and the selection of accompaniment pitch and texture, as well as the display of song accompaniment. At the same time, specific problems and training tasks are set for the teaching content explained in each stage of micro course textbooks, so that students can effectively summarize the scattered knowledge points they have mastered and timely discover the problems they encounter in their own knowledge systems such as accompaniment piano arrangement by dealing with the specific problems set in the course materials. When setting questions, it is generally advisable to consider how to select chords, and at the same time, what questions should be considered, as well as the definition of chord overtones. In addition, universities also need to establish corresponding teacher interaction platforms, which can form in class communication groups through the most popular software such as WeChat, QQ, Tencent Meeting, etc., allowing university students to submit their problems in the group in a timely manner. Teachers can then provide systematic solutions throughout the classroom process by comprehensively analyzing the questions raised by university students.

5.4 Innovate and reform China's inherent teaching methods, and arrange classroom teaching reasonably

According to the traditional teaching model, innovation and reform can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, teachers need to effectively handle the problems that students encounter during the pre class preparation stage. In addition to being systematically explained by the teacher, it is also necessary to allow students to exchange views with each other in the group and provide them with corresponding guidance. On the basis of overcoming students' existing problems, further train their collaborative awareness and problem-solving ability. In the second stage, they must be allowed to showcase their improvisational accompaniment achievements. Select some college students as role models in the course, and have college students provide evaluations of the accompanying content and issues that arise, followed by peer evaluation by educators. When accompanists realize that their accompaniment repertoire is insufficient, educators request accompaniment demonstrations to provide college students with a reference accompaniment template. In the third stage, complete music pieces should be selected and given to students for free accompaniment discussions. In this process, teachers need to try to weaken their own position as much as possible, so that students can propose preliminary accompaniment arrangements based on their piano foundation and through communication after their own thinking. At this time, teachers should not make too many comments, but at most make corresponding adjustments to students' direction. Afterwards, each student will use off class learning opportunities to perform accompaniment and arrangement work, and

accurately pass it on to themselves after the end, providing corresponding modifications and suggestions to college students, thus forming a virtuous cycle process, and ultimately driving students' comprehensive improvement in piano improvisation performance ability.

5.5 Strengthen interaction with students in the classroom

For undergraduate teaching content, teachers should break the traditional teaching methods, encourage students to communicate with each other, fully stimulate students' interest in learning, and cultivate initiative. To achieve the most efficient interactive learning, teachers must fully engage students in teaching to fully mobilize their learning initiative. Due to the characteristics of low communication volume and low communication in traditional teaching methods, and the fact that most teaching is teacher centered, teachers are unable to fully mobilize students' subjectivity. Regarding this issue, teachers should take students as the main body, implement the principle of student-centered education, reasonably motivate and guide students, and help them communicate and speak more in the classroom. During class, teachers should provide students with appropriate difficulty levels and strong thinking skills based on the textbook, giving them space for thinking. At the same time, teaching discussion groups can be established. After submitting the questions, the teacher can give students corresponding time to enter the group for internal discussion. Finally, representatives can be selected and the group's learning achievements can be shared with everyone. Students with excellent learning abilities and good expression skills can help students with weaker learning abilities, not only enhancing their own teaching confidence, but also improving the grades of students with poor learning abilities.

5.6 Creating a Good Teaching Environment

One of the main ways to attract students' attention is situational education, which can avoid the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods and create a quiet and pleasant teaching and learning environment. In traditional classroom teaching, teachers are the main body, while college students are in a disadvantaged position because teachers often set students' thinking directions and fail to cultivate their own active thinking abilities, thereby reducing students' interest in learning. In situational education, it is led by college students, and teachers guide college students to think and ask questions independently in the context, thereby dispersing students' thinking abilities. At the same time, teachers also need to make college students understand that they are the main body of teaching, guide students to speak and think, and be their own teaching protagonists. In addition, teachers should also ensure their leading effect in traditional classroom teaching, and provide timely assistance and guidance in answering questions that students cannot grasp or understand. Applying flipped teaching can fully leverage the respective functions of teachers and students, promoting the improvement of teaching.

6. CONCLUSION

Introducing the flipped mode in piano and improvisational accompaniment courses is of great significance for further improving the actual teaching quality and adapting to the diverse learning requirements of current university students. The introduction of flipped classroom teaching mode in university piano and improvisational accompaniment courses can largely maintain students' subject status, solve the problems brought by traditional teaching mode, and achieve the goal of consolidating students' foundation and meeting the needs of modern education development.

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