

An exploration of integrating the dual collegiate system into the English public speaking activity for non-governmental college students – taking the dark horse speaker at Chongqing College of Mobile Communication as an example

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Abstract: The article is an exploration of the English public speaking activity, the dark horse speaker (DHS) held at Chongqing College of Mobile Communication (the College). The article provides readers with a general picture of the general operation of the activity integrating the dual collegiate system and the complementary roles of the college instructors and the residential college counselors in the DHS. At the end of the thesis, a reflection is given for the further improvement of the speech activity.

Key words: dark horse speaker; English public speaking; dual collegiate system; residential college

1 Educational positioning and features of the college

Chongqing College of Mobile Communication (the College) currently houses about 20,000 undergraduates on two campuses respectively in the Districts of Hechuan and Qijiang. "The College strives to cultivate undergraduates to become managerial talents for small-to-medium-sized enterprises with sufficient professional expertise particularly specialized in commercial and technological industries [1]." The College has implemented an educational practice called "Four-in-One" with the dual collegiate system throughout its 4-year undergraduate programs.

1.1 The Four-in-One

The Four-in-One refers to "integrating well-rounded education, liberal education, education of essential business and commercial knowledge, and education of professional knowledge into students' development [2]". The relationship between the 4 aspects is not to add onto each other but to multiply each other. Therefore, students are expected to be highly motivated and harvest a fruitful outcome by the time they graduate.

1.2 The dual collegiate system

The academy system is widely adopted in many higher institutes and is the most commonly seen educational model. In the academy system, a university or college is organized into specific schools, faculties, or institutions, and each of them

specializes in a particular discipline or field of study. The academy system provides students with the academic resources, guidance, and environment needed to excel in their chosen fields of study.

The College introduced the residential college system to "provide undergraduates with a friendly, peer-assistance, and holistic growth experience throughout their college life" [4]. And the mode of the dual-collegiate system has been implemented throughout its 4 years of college education.

The dual collegiate system means the collaboration, integration, and co-cultivation of students' academic, professional, and personal growths holistically from the academy (e.g. the School of Foreign Languages) they study at, and the residential community they live in. In this way, students gain their professional expertise at a specific school or faculty and explore their personal development at the residential college that they live in.

2 Residential college system and its significance in history

"The Residential College System in the West, also known as the House System, first appeared in Great Britain at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham[11]." "A dormitory is organized to provide food and shelter; a (residential) college, to provide for the student's intellectual, social, and personal development [8]." "Such a system then has been adopted by universities in many parts of the world, including the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Fudan University, and Jinan University [5][6]." Chongqing College of Mobile Communication is probably the first non-governmental college in southwest China that has adopted such a system into its educational practice.

It is worth mentioning that the residential college is not exclusive to the West. "In China, the earliest Shuyuan, the Chinese residential college, appeared around the Tang Dynasty and reached its peak during the Dynasties of Ming and Qing [10]." Shuyuan in Chinese history serves not just as a place of teaching and learning but also as an engaging platform and community for its scholar residents to preserve and transmit the classics and knowledge, discuss and debate, and exchange different schools of thought. As can be seen, the residential college, no matter in the Western system or the ancient Chinese societies, plays a significant role in students' holistic development.

3 The significance to students' development

According to the theory of Multiple Intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner, "human intelligence should be differentiated into various modalities rather than viewed as a single general ability or a result of the IQ test [9]." An educator should realize that students are intelligent and excel in different areas. "Some of the freshmen might have not achieved an outstanding score in Gaokao (The National College Entrance Examination of China), yet the fact that they are talented beyond their academic aspect should not be ignored [7]."

For instance, some are sociable, charismatic, and excellent team leaders; some are kinaesthetic and great performers; and some are creative in writing. Each of the students possesses varying degrees of intelligence (e.g. logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, etc.) and the diverse attributes of students and their uniqueness should be recognized and accepted. Therefore, one of the very important purposes and functions of higher education is to strive to meet and develop all forms of intelligence possessed by students.

In the academy system, students are exposed to professional knowledge, are well prepared for the vocational area they will step into, and are well trained and offered with in-depth knowledge and skills that will help them excel in their future vocational positions, while the residential college system provides students with a strong sense of community, connecting them to peoples and their environments, fostering an appreciation for the difference among individuals, and making them recognize their own merits or talents.

The dual collegiate system offers a great opportunity for undergraduates to grow both academically and socially, introspect about the inner self, and look out to the outside world. Students are more likely, in this way, to become more

open-minded, inclusive, resilient, and internationalized.

4 An introduction to the dark horse speaker (DHS)

The dark horse speaker (DHS) is a student-centred English public speaking activity that is held every three or four weeks, and it is a practical part of the College-sponsored Higher Education Teaching and Learning Reform Research Project numbered 22JG354. The overall goal of the project is to explore the ways of nurturing students' English public speaking skills and confidence in the dual collegiate system.

As a public speaking activity, the DHS provides students with a tentative experience to help them articulate their ideas in English. The goals of the DHS are, on one hand, to help boost students' self-confidence in English oratory; and on the other hand, to prepare students for their careers with an emphasis on the close connection to the development of Chongqing and Chengdu economic zones. Each session of the DHS lasts about 90 minutes, and by the end of 2023, 9 sessions have been held (Table 1).

Table 1. A list of topics at the DHS

Session	Topic	Duration	Location	Facilities
1	The Change of My Hometown	80 min; 2 Nov. 2022	Tianqu Room 110	Microphones, Microphone stand; Loudspeakers, Projector & Screen, Podium, Stationery
2	A Technology that I Love the Most Discussion: Metaverse and Its Impacts	90 min; 30 Nov. 2022	Online	App: Tecent Meeting
3	Leadership Passage readings for Leadership	80 min, 15 Mar, 2023	Tianqu Room 110	Microphones, Microphone stand; Loudspeakers, Projector & Screen, Podium, Stationery
4	Campus Life and Dream Career	80 min, 19 Apr. 2023	Room 9105	As above
5	Studying Overseas	90 min. 24 May 2023	Tianqu Room 110	As above
6	Holidays Discussion: Customs and Traditions	80 min 27 Sep. 2023	Tianqu Room 110	As above
7	Artificial Intelligence Discussion: The Impact of AI on Students' Learning	90 min 25 Oct. 2023	Heyue Residential College Café	As above
8	My Stories with the College	80 min, 8 Nov. 2023	Heyue Residential College Café	As above
9	An Outdoor English Public Speaking Event: The Dark Horse Speaker in Style	90 min, 6 Dec.2023	The Grand Xingzhe Park Lawn	Microphones, Microphone stand; Loudspeakers, TV, Displaying Boards

4.1 The profile of participants

For the first few sessions, most participants are English majors, and a few students have a background in engineering.

The English majors seem to have better command of the language, are more articulate of their ideas, and are less anxious when they speak. However, students with engineering background are very informed of the development and changes of the world. Engineering background students might not speak English as fluently as English majors, but some of them are very creative and critical thinkers and keep a closer look at their surrounding world.

In each session of the DHS, students from different majors can greatly contribute their ideas, personal experiences, and outlooks in the speaking activities, and they can see how others perceive the same topic from a different angle, and how they persuade the listeners to accept and support their ideas. It also helps students to develop the habit of good listening, as a good speaker is first a good listener.

4.2 The choosing of the speech topic

Participants, the instructor (currently the author, from the School of Foreign Languages, instructs the DHS.), and the counsellor (from the Tianqu Residential College) will discuss and decide on the topic one or two weeks before the starts of next session. One important principle to take into consideration is that the chosen topic must be meaningful to students' lives, or it helps students gain a deeper insight about a particular academic or vocational field they will step into or helps students reflect on the world they are living in.

It's worth noting that the speeding development of contemporary China, the rejuvenation of traditional Chinese culture, and the contribution China makes to humanity, are making a great impact on the course of history and reshaping the landscape of world civilization. Therefore, students are encouraged to explore China's social developments, changes, and achievements in their speeches.

4.3 The setting-up of the room

A place where students can feel friendly, comfortable, and relaxed is very important. A student-friendly setting greatly helps students reduce their sense of anxiety, feel less threatened, and boosts verbal communication among peers and the teacher.

While the instructor can give general advice on the setting-up of the place, a counsellor helps coordinate the use of facilities on the site, where microphones, loudspeakers, a microphone stand, a projector (with screen), a TV, and couches and tables are equipped. And a podium, snacks, and drinks can be the optional choices.

The couches are arranged into a hemicycle or in a chevron, where the speaker can be seen in the middle by other students. The hemicycle seating arrangement provides better visibility and interaction among participants, creating a more conducive environment for discussion and debate [3].

The speaking activities were hard to organize during the period of COVID-19, however, once a topic was well chosen and released at least 10 days in advance, with a sophisticated use of the online educational application, both participants and the instructor were able to be engaged in articulating their ideas at the online meeting room.

4.4 The roles of the instructor and the counsellor

The constructive and complementary relationship between the instructor and the counsellor helps the growth of the activity and is very important to the quality of the event.

The instructor is an English language teacher whose role is to work closely with the counsellor to design and implement the contents of the activities, give (the one-to-one) training to students, and attend each session, providing constructive feedback on site. The instructor should have a keen interest in English public speaking and have rich experience in tutoring students for relevant events or contests.

The counsellor can play a positive role as a liaison officer among students, the instructor, and the residential college. As they are working with students almost every single day, counselors are more likely to establish a closer link to students

emotionally and psychologically.

The counsellor may provide helpful advice to student-assistants on, for instance, room use and set-up, the adjustment of the multimedia, the release of event information, the management of the digital platform, and the suggestion on poster design.

All these preparatory works require the instructor and the counsellor to have a thorough understanding of the nature of the activity, engage in open and candid discussions, and persevere despite problems and issues that may occur.

4.5 The dark horse speaker in style (DHSS)

To follow up on the progress students have made, an outdoor public speaking event, the Dark Horse Speaker in Style (DHSS), was then jointly held by the College of Foreign Languages and the Residential College Commune of Xingzhe Park (including the Tianqu Residential College).

The event is a platform for students to display their English oratory in front of their peers and teachers. Students make their own decisions about the topics and receive suggestions and tutoring on the content layout and presentation techniques from the instructor. Some of the students also gave a talent show after the completion of their speeches.

From the varying themes (Table 2) that students have chosen, it can be said that they are very aware of the changes and developments of the world. The event invited the Chinese English language teachers and native English-speaking teachers to be the judges and a bilingual marking sheet (Table 3) was also introduced. At the end of the event, students were awarded the Supreme Dark Horse, the Most Stylish Dark Horse, and the Dark Horse with Great Potentials.

Table 2. Topics given at the DHSS

1	Rural Construction and Development in China
2	The Rise of Chinese Culture
3	Nuclear Pollution
4	Refusing Appearance and Body Anxiety
5	Children in War
6	Yunnan Huaping Girls' High School
7	From the Forbidden City to Buckingham Palace
8	Plastic Pollution
9	Artificial Intelligence in Daily Life
10	Relationship

Table 3. The marking criteria for the DHSS

Descriptors	Contents	Score	Judge's score
The content and theme	The speech is well-structured and coherent with some degree of novelty. The speech shows the educational positioning of the College and reflects the developments/changes of times and the society.	2.0	
The use of language	The contestant speaks English naturally with accuracy and fluency and uses a variety of linguistic patterns without making major mistakes.	2.0	
Body language	The contestant employs a variety of body language (e.g. eye contact, gestures, facial expression, etc.) to help deliver the content.	2.0	
Dress code	The contestant is confident and creative and is dressed decently according to one's status and age.	2.0	

The use of visual aids	The contestant employs a visual aid (e.g. PPT, graph, video, etc.) to maximize the effect of the speech.	2.0	
The talent show (for the extra points)	The contestant gives a talent show that is associated with the content of the speech.	1.0 (for extra-point)	

4.6 Reflection and following-up on the DHSS

A few suggestions are given for the DHSS.

Before the event news is posted on the College's website, the instructor, the counsellor, and the reporter should co-read the draft thoroughly and provide constructive feedback to make sure the key information included is clear and accurate.

Once the event is decided to be hosted bilingually, a round of selection for student hosts should also be included to ensure that they can participate in training, warm-up, and on-site rehearsal before the activity.

When the location of the event is decided, the venue should be visually signposted to avoid conflict with other activities using the same site.

The students' on-site performance should be reported in the news and the instructor's recommendations, especially regarding academic content, should also be considered. The instructor has been involved in the whole process of academic guidance, the tutoring of script writing, the choice of the speech-delivery style for each student, and the handling of emergencies. Therefore, the instructor is more likely to have a more holistic view of the progress of the whole event.

The inclusion of students' feedback on the activity is also necessary. On one hand, it reflects the desired outcome, the joint effort made by all sides, and the progress the students have made; on the other hand, it also provides a valuable reference for future activities.

5 Conclusion

The DHS is a tentative way of encouraging students to use English to articulate their ideas, and explore wider opportunities for their academic and vocational futures, involving the joint effort of the academy and the residential colleges.

The dual-collegiate system has helped students to develop a diverse set of skills including the skill of English oratory. Besides, it is also a more holistic approach that further helps students explore their talents, merits, and great potential in different fields.

When students collaborate with each other through listening, discussing, and providing solutions, their patience, the spirit of teamwork, and problem-solution skills are also being nurtured.

Last but not least, the teamwork between the instructor and the counsellor deepens the mutual understanding, respect, and support of each other at the workplace so that more student-centred activities can be organized and implemented.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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