

# The Positive Influence of America Dramas on College Students in China<sup>①</sup>

WANG Shu-lan

Institute of Marxism,  
Northwest University for Nationalities,  
Lanzhou, Gansu, 730030, China

## Abstract

*As the development of the technology, the popularity of the network and the globalization, more and more American dramas flood into China. As a part of high education groups, college students are the top fans of the America dramas. This paper research aims to find three reasons for the positive influences of America dramas on college students. Firstly, watching American dramas can gradually improve college students' English, especially their oral English. Secondly, watching American dramas can make the college students more confident to communicate with others and find their self-worth. thirdly, watching American dramas can enrich college students' thoughts.*

**Key words:** America Dramas; Positive Influence; College Students

## Introduction

As the development of the Internet, America dramas became an important part of our daily life and affect our behaviors, many people argue that we should stop introducing the America dramas because it will inevitably bring some negative effects on the growth of college students, for example, some of the American dramas promote the individualism, egoism, materialism, what's more, they also promote violence, sex, and other problems. However, we all know that we should see the advantage of this phenomenon, which is the positive influence of America dramas on college students.

In fact, with the rapid development of the Internet, watching America dramas becomes an important way to learn English in China, there are many favorite Americas drama we know: “*Friends*”, “*Desperate Housewives*”, “*Prison Break*” and so on .The unique story line and humorous language have attracted the attention of many English-speaking and stimulated the enthusiasm of English learners, what's important is that watching America dramas improved their oral English ability and gained self-confidence and multifaceted ability to deal with the problems in their life.

---

<sup>①</sup> 本文系西北民族大学中央高校基本科研业务费专项资金项目《西北地区少数民族大学生民族认同心理与行为适应研究》【项目编号：31920130106】的阶段性成果。

This paper research aims to find three reasons for the positive influences of America dramas on college students. Firstly, watching American dramas can gradually improve college students' English, especially their oral English. Secondly, watching American dramas can make the college students more confident to communicate with others and find their self-worth. Thirdly, watching American dramas can enrich college students' thoughts.

### **The background of the America dramas in China**

As the fast development of the cheap Internet technology, such as broadband and WiFi, and also because of the translators, many Dramas are released online ,or VCD and DVD formats, those make the Dramas popularized in China, and Chinese people have the opportunity to see the foreign dramas finally. Among those foreign dramas, "American TV dramas are the undisputed leader in the international television marketplace" (Bielby and Harrington, 2005).

In 1980s,as the America dramas *Garrison's Gorillas* was firstly introduced into China, then the *Man from Atlantis*, *The Growing Pains*, *Detective Henry* were in the sight of Chinese people gradually,in1990s,the America dramas such as *Friends*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Crime Scene Investigation*, *The Big Bang Theory* became more and more popular,(Chen yuanfang 陈远芳, Hao yongkang 郝永康, 2008) ,for example," Over the past five years, The Big Bang Theory alone has been streamed more than 1.3 billion times (<http://edu.163.com/14/0319/09/9NMIFSCV00294MBE.html>).”American dramas attract the youth ,not only because of the characteristics of the western culture, but also because of abundant content in the American dramas, like the love, friendship, scientific, political scandals, religion, violence, sex and so on.

Chinese audiences enjoy the American dramas very much. The most important audiences are the urban youth of white-collar workers and college students, those people are highly educated with a high English level and their thoughts are more open, and they are very familiar with the internet and have a high interesting in the European and American culture, that is to say, "The better educated preferred American dramas, partly because the fast and complicated narrative appeal requires highly developed literacy." (QiaoL J, Louis L, 2012)More importantly, the America dramas can meet those youths' development needs, they are unwilling to be lonely and hate monotonous life, they love the novel and personal things very much. and the drama is thrilling and humorous, which can meet those people's aesthetic ,visual and spiritual requirements.

### **1. Watching America dramas can gradually improve college students' English, especially oral English.**

As the development of the globalization, world language seems more significant for every country. As in China, the government pays more attention to the matter of learning foreign languages, especially English, so as for the college students, they are asked to pass their CET4 and CET6, then they can get their certificate of bachelor's degree, if they want to go to further study for master degree or doctor degree, they are also asked to pass the examination of English. In a word, as college students, they must master English, so the students have to find a path to help them to learn English quickly.

When Chinese college students learn English, the biggest difficulty is not the grammar and vocabularies, but the listening and speaking part .and Chinese college students own few opportunity to communicate with foreigners, Many Chinese students' written test scores can be very good, but in real life, their English is just "dumb English" .

In recent years, the rise of the scene teaching is considered a valid way of learning English, this kind of scene teaching includes watching American dramas. As Stephen Rasher's "Language-input hypothesis theory" said that "You need the following language input: Language-input need enough input, intelligibility,

Interest and relevance, and not grammatically sequenced” (Tian xingyu 田新宇, Liang meihong 梁美红, Yu qianwen 宇钱文 2011). So in this theory, language learning can not be separated from the real language environment, watching American dramas is one of the best way to input language, students are motivated to watch the American dramas to enhance their ability to learn English. so watching American dramas is the best way to stimulus students to learn English well. This form of learning English is fully equipped with the required two important elements: visual and auditory. American dramas can provide a large amount of information, a lively form of expression, those are very helpful to the students to learn English. Even some of the students who crazily love American dramas are called “the American dramas groups”, their slogan is “watch drama, learn English.” As the introduction of the American dramas, students never fail to find lively and humorous scenes, featured story, and the authentic expression, this undoubtedly stimulates the enthusiasm of English learners and improve their English level. Through watching America dramas, college students can get lots of listening and speaking materials, some of the dialogues are consisted of basic vocabularies, so by watching America dramas again and again, they can understand American thinking and their logic, this will help them to speak authentically gradually (Tian. PinJing 田晶晶, 2013).

Secondly, watching the American dramas can effectively alleviate what the mechanical learning English brought the tension. No matter how bad ones’ oral part and listening part, as long as insisting watching the American dramas, students will develop the sense of language in English by imitating the language, speed and demeanor body language of the roles. Through repeated learning and practice and imitation, students can get authentic pure English expression fully.

In addition, the American dramas can also reflect a lot of colloquial content. The dialogue style in the American dramas is very casual, affinity and very humorous, and some new vocabularies in the American dramas have also been timely reflected, those specific context play a crucial role in establishing the language sense and built important listening practice material. According to repeat watching America dramas, students can correct their pronunciation and form an rigorous logic thinking. So with such a modern media platform, Chinese students can learn a lot of American spoken language and understand in what kind of circumstances can fully use those spoken language. In this situation, the Chinese students will be more comfortable and confident to use the English language.

## **2. Watching America dramas can make students more confident.**

Firstly, watching the American Dramas make the students more confident to communicate with others. College students are in the period of the growth and exploration, when they face many problems in the colleges, such as how to get along with others, how to make themselves happy, how to get a good job, how to cooperate with others, how to make a boyfriend or a girlfriend, they expect to get the answers. In fact, some of the answers can be directly found in the America\ dramas, many American dramas show the way to get along with each other, such as the neighbors, couples, friends, parents and their children. Perhaps it is more effective to solve the Communication problems to use the American humor and their own wisdom, there is no doubt that watching America dramas can enrich the students the way to contact with others and to solve their social problems.

*“As a kind of recreational activity, viewing TV dramas can also serve as a means of gaining social recognition or influence, or being an opinion leader because the content viewed on foreign TV dramas is often a topic for discussion and exchange. Similarly, learning, as a strong motivation, gives clues to the imagination and imitation of modernity by consuming foreign TV dramas (Xu, 2007).”*

Secondly, watching America dramas can help the students to find their own identity of belonging and self-value. according to enjoying the American dramas, college students catch the America culture, then they broaden horizons, broaden knowledge, renew the idea, improve their thinking ability, when the college

students participate in the discussion of plot, “they find the value of identity instead of real interest, this will make those who feel confused free from oppression, according to ‘conversation the drama, they can find the ways of identity of belonging and self-worth’.”(Lin aiqing 刘爱清,2007),this can also make them confident to face the reality and find their own identity of belonging and self-value.

### 3. Watching American dramas can enrich the college students’ thoughts

When learning language, students should not only focus on the language itself, but should also pay more attention to the culture behind the language. The content of American dramas related to all aspects of American life, work, life, learning, attitudes, values. So in fact the American dramas not only meet people's pursuit of the visual, but also cause people rational thinking which is the Chinese college students high-level requirements in learning English. For example, the equal, democratic and respect atmosphere in the family can profoundly impact on the youth to be frank, true, equal, free, scientific, and some themes can enhance the young people to be social responsibility and social consciousness.

In the American dramas, there are lots of the western nature such as the social etiquette, catering etiquette, students can learn from American dramas to get the western nature, which greatly reduce the stress and tension caused by cross-culture. The natural context in the American dramas is an important bridge for the students to get the western values and behavioral logic, which can effectively avoid embarrassment and conflict in the cross-cultural communication. it also can help adolescents to adapt to the needs of reality, overcome idealism and sensibility, and form a positive outlook on life and values.

“China is currently in a transitional period, which means somehow it lacks its own original popular cultural products, leaving the door open to foreign pop cultures. In the push for China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), foreign cultural products such as imported TV dramas will further flood into the Chinese market.” (Qiao L J, Louis L,2012),as a sort of cultural product, America dramas bring their cultures and values. Barker(1997) argued that TV drama are the only one capable of making loyal viewer base, and he also argued that TV dramas are “one of the most exported forms of television viewed in a large number of cultural contexts”(1997:75) .In general, American dramas used a complicated storytelling way to show their own culture, most of the drama reflects social reality, human life and emotion, such as the dramas of *the big bang theory*, *two and a half men*, *bankruptcy*, *the idol drama*, *Gossip Girl*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *the Nine Lives of Chloe King*, *Detective drama*, *Bones*, *Criminal Minds*, *Science Fiction*, *Supernatural*. The stories are always full of the American spirits, personality, equality, happiness, enterprising, passion, responsibility, freedom, justice, love, wisdom and goodness, these topics can always offer the Chinese youth different tests, pleasures, rewards and undoubtedly promote young generation of social responsibility and consciousness.(Chen yuanfang 陈远芳 ,Hao yongkang 郝永康,2008). those thoughts and spirits are deeply rooted in the hearts of the college students, these thoughts are very helpful to the college students to grow up.“Well-educated and well-informed thinkers were more likely to watch for entertainment and learning. Strivers and innovators tended to watch for sociability.” (QiaoL J, Louis L, 2012) Such as in the drama *friends*, we can understand the thought of ordinary American people who are open and free, pursuit happiness and equality, they are dependent and confident. So according watching the American dramas, students are encouraged to struggle to solve the problem to find their own happiness and their responsibility to the country.

On the other hand, watching American dramas can break the students’ conventional thinking mode. In traditional Chinese dramas, the characters can easily be divided into two parts, good person or bad person, but in the reality, we all know that it is not correct to simple divided people like that. When we see the America dramas, it is difficult to find a pure good person or pure bad person in the reality, because we all have the stain of human nature. this will make the students closer to the nature and reality and obviously

make the students change their conventional thinking mode and enrich their thoughts. There are many American TV forums online, for the plot development and the character of the roles, they have their own ideas, and publish their own insights.

Thirdly, through watching TV dramas can broaden the college students' vision and knowledge and update their ideas. the college students is in the growth period, so their psychological and physiological characteristics determine their sensitivity and efficiency to learning the new things. TV dramas show many new ideas and new knowledge of modernization, so it is conducive to change the youth's rigid ideology and their way of life and enables college students to find their life relief and value from the depressing reality, then they will be a new generation with an international vision. At the same time, it is conducive for the students to cultivate social responsibility and enhance their public morality, social morality is the most important content of socialization, the people in social life should be common to comply with the code of ethics and behavior. Adolescence is in the most intense period of socialization, they affected easily to social behavior and values. When young audiences watching the US dramas, they can achieve and experience a more open concept, integrate themselves into the wider world, and think more about the country, society, human, environment, and other modern topics.

## Conclusion

As the development of the technology, the popularity of the network and the globalization, more and more American dramas flood into China, as a part of high education groups, college students are the top fans of the America dramas. As the America dramas are introduced for a long time, what are the main positive influence that the American dramas effect the Chinese students? This paper aims to find three points. Firstly, Watching America dramas can strengthen their English level, especially because of authentic English, they can obviously improve their oral English; Secondly, watching America dramas can make the college students more confident, such as improving their communication skills and help the students to find their own identity of belonging and self-value. Thirdly, Watching American dramas can enrich the college students thoughts. According to watch the American dramas, students struggle to solve the problems to find their own happiness and their responsibility to the country; they change their convention thinking mode after watching America dramas; through watching TV dramas can broaden the college students' vision and knowledge, update their ideas and cultivate the students' social responsibility and enhance their public morality.

## Bibliography

Baker, C. (1997) .*Global Television: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Bielby D.D and Harrington CL (2005) *Opening America? The telenovelaization of U.S. soap operas*.  
Television and New Media 6(4): 383–399

Cheng yuan fang ,hao yong kang,(2008),*mei ju zou re dui qing shao nian si xiang dao de fa zhan de ying xiang*,dang dai qing nian yan jiu,5-7

Lin ai qing 刘爱清,(2007),*han ju re bo dui zhong guo qing shao nian de ying xiang tan xi 韩剧热播对中国青少年的影响探析* ,he bei qing nian gan bu xue yuan xue bao 河北青年干部学院学报,7  
4 ( 2 ) : 28- 31.

- Qiao leiJiang, Louis Leung, (2012) *Lifestyles, gratifications sought, and narrative appeal: American and Korean TV drama viewing among Internet users in urban China*, International Communication Gazette, ,74(2) 159–180
- Tian PinJing 田晶晶, (2013), *guan yu mei ju dui ying yu de bang zhu:yi"friends"wei li* 关于美剧对应于的帮助: 以"friends"为例, overseas,84-85.
- Tian xingyu 田新宇, Liang meihong梁美红, Yu qianwen 宇钱文(2011),*guan kan mei ju dui ying yu ci hui fudai xi de de ying xiang*观看美剧对应于词汇附带习得的影响, da xue ying yu 大学英语, 8 (1) ,318-323
- Xu J.H., (2007) *Brand-new lifestyle: Consumer-oriented programmes on Chinese television*. Media, Culture and Society 29(3): 363–376.
- <http://green67.blogbus.com/logs/11064993.html>, 2007- 11- 25
- <http://edu.163.com/14/0319/09/9NMIFSCV00294MBE.html>(2014.3)
- [http://ent.ifeng.com/a/20140415/35784189\\_0.shtml](http://ent.ifeng.com/a/20140415/35784189_0.shtml)(2014.4)
- [http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-04/15/c\\_126376675.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-04/15/c_126376675.htm)(2014.4)