Implications of PAD Class Model in College English Teaching and Learning of Application-oriented Universities

Min Yang¹, Lirui Duan¹,* and Zhou Chen¹

¹School of Foreign Languages, Kunming University, Kunming, Yunnan, 650214, China
*The Corresponding author. Email:58338569@qq.com

ABSTRACT
As a new teaching mode, PAD class was proposed by Xuexin Zhang in 2013, which aims to improve students’ autonomous learning ability through the combination of traditional and discussion classes. Since its first introduction into college classroom teaching, it has been extended to all stages of education and various subjects in China. “PAD Class Model” has been proved to be practical and instructive. This paper tries to explore its implications in college English teaching reform of Kunming University, which is bringing into full play its advantages, making up for its deficiency, and trying to let it play an active role in its teaching practice.

Keywords: PAD class; college English teaching and learning; implications

1. INTRODUCTION
With the aim of promoting the development of individualized study methods and the autonomous learning ability on the part of students, Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China put forward “changes in the teaching model from a teacher-centered pattern to a student-centered one, in which the ability to use the language and the ability to learn independently are cultivated in addition to language knowledge and skills”. [1] The importance of cultivating college students’ autonomous learning ability and critical thinking ability has been illustrated over and over again by many scholars in China, among which one of the notable scholars in the last few years is Xuexin Zhang. Xuexin Zhang, professor of Fudan University, answered the question how students’ abilities could be enhanced by putting forward a new teaching mode, PAD Class. After its widely application in all stages of education in China, PAD Class Model has been proved to be effective and productive. On the one hand, it accords with the main teaching objectives of College English Curriculum Requirements. [1] On the other hand, it can ensure the main position of students in the learning process, improve students’ learning efficiency and promote the reform of classroom teaching in China. [2] [3]

2. PAD CLASS MODEL

2.1. Definition of PAD Class Model
To address some major problems in current university classroom teaching, that is, bad learning habits in class (playing mobile phone games, sleeping, passive learning and so on), and poor communication between teacher and students, PAD Class Model was proposed by Professor Xuexin Zhang of Fudan University in 2013, in which the core idea is to allocate half of the class time to teachers’ presentation, and half to students for interactive learning in the form of mutual discussion. With the class being divided into two parts (while-class and after class), students will have enough time to make autonomous learning and individualized assimilation after class. [5]

2.2. Procedures of PAD Class Model
As innovation in current classroom teaching, PAD class combines advantages of traditional lectures and discussion. There are three main steps in PAD Class Model, namely P (presentation), A (assimilation), and D (discussion). [6] The core concept of PAD Class is “teaching after learning”. In the first lesson, the teacher introduces the main contents, key and difficult points of this unit, without a detailed explanation. Afterward, the teacher assigns students to do individual assimilation through autonomous learning after class, in which students are required to finish so-called assignments “Liang Kao Bang”. [5] “Liang” stands for “Liang Shanshan”, which
means students need to “list the contents which they feel deeply most, benefit most and appreciate most in learning this unit”. “Kao” refers to “Kao Kaoni”, which requires students to make a list of their own understanding of this unit, but other students may feel puzzled to challenge them. “Bang” is the abbreviation of “Bang Bangwo”, which needs students to list problems that they don’t understand and to ask for help from their classmates or the teacher in the following session of discussion. There will be one week for students to finish their autonomous learning and the required assignment. The specific procedures of a PAD class are as follows.

![Figure 1. PAD Class Model](image)

2.3. Theoretical Basis

As a new teaching mode, PAD Class is in line with the law of cognitive psychology, as well as the educational philosophy of student-centered teaching. Three main theories are contributing to this innovative teaching mode, namely, cognitive learning theory, constructive learning theory, and cooperative learning theory.

2.3.1. Cognitive Learning Theory

Cognitive learning theory has been especially prominent in explaining how to construct meaningful cognitive structures in learning. The key to acquiring new knowledge is to connect it with the language learner’s existing knowledge structure, namely the integration of old knowledge and new knowledge. Based on “The Learning Pyramid” (see Figure 2 below), researched and created by the National Training Laboratories in Maine, active participation in the learning process results in higher retention of learning, among which teaching others ranks the first with 90%. The next is practice with 75%, followed by group discussion at 50%.

![Figure 2. The Learning Pyramid/ The Cone of Learning](image)

Under the context of PAD Class Model, the first step is presentation, to present new knowledge (the key contents of this week) to students. Secondly, students are required to make individual assimilation through autonomous learning after class, which would help them review already-known knowledge and acquire new knowledge. Finally, when it comes to the session of discussion, students need to “teach” other students after they have fully understood the content by means of discussion. PAD class is a perfect example of bringing students’ active learning into full play.

2.3.2. Constructive Learning Theory

Since the 1990s, constructivism emphasizes that learners’ knowledge is not taught by the teacher but constructed by the learner themselves. According to Swiss philosopher and psychologist J. Piaget in the 1960s, children acquire knowledge by means of mutual interaction with external environment. Vygotsky (1978) stresses that learners in the cognitive process are always under certain social and cultural backgrounds, social activities and social interaction which affect the development of individual’s advanced psychological function. Therefore, learning is the process of meaning construction through interpersonal assistance in a certain situation. The key to meaning construction is to link the current learning content with already-known knowledge. Based on the theory, we can tell that PAD Class Model emphasizes students’ central position in learning, while the teacher is only a guider, or an assistant of the classroom activities in order to help students with their meaning construction.

2.3.3. Cooperative Learning Theory

As the typical representative of cooperative learning theory, Johnson D. W. and Johnson R. T. (1990) believe that it is a kind of group learning, in which groups are fully used as learning units. According to Slavin (1990), cooperative learning is a kind of social approach that enables students to work together and complete the same tasks or assignments. In PAD class, after experiencing presentation and assimilation, students need to discuss their own learning experiences and difficulties with their group members, which can well conform with the principle of cooperative learning theory.

3. Implications of PAD Class Model in College English Teaching and Learning

In 2014, Professor Xuexin Zhang took the lead in implementing PAD Class Model into undergraduate classroom teaching of psychology, which proved to be effective and reasonable in turning students’ passive learning into independent and active learning. [6]
Afterward, many studies have been conducted in different stages of education and subjects. [7] Although with just a few years’ application and practice, there are some implications for college English teaching and learning in application-oriented universities.

3.1. Advantages of the Application of PAD Class Model in College English Classroom Teaching

3.1.1. Changing the way of teaching and learning

In traditional college English classroom teaching, there exist many problems, like low efficiency in learning and passive learning. Teachers try hard to teach new words, give examples, explain the structure, and present PPT; while students just sit there doing their own things. [8] The whole teaching process is mostly teacher-centered. It is the teacher who is responsible for designing and implementing everything in class, including what to teach, why to teach and how to teach. PAD Class Model is the perfect separation of teachers’ teaching and students’ learning. For one thing, the teacher takes the role of having objectives, plans and organizations to help students understand how to learn better. For another, students have their own specific learning goals, plans and arrangements. Therefore, teachers’ teaching and students’ learning are of equal importance.

3.1.2. Maximizing time allocation

In recent years, there is a trend of reduction in credits and class hours in college English teaching. According to Cai Jigang (2012), “course credit for College English has been reduced to 12 credits in half of the second-tier universities of China, 6-9 credits in most key universities”. [9] Under such a context, how to solve the problem of making full use of the limited time in class in order to improve students’ learning efficiency deserves our attention. PAD Class Model is all about time allocation. As we all know, the teacher’s presentation, the students’ assimilation, and the comprehensive discussion and communication are three major steps in PAD class. This class mode has a clear time line, which is entirely consistent with the concept of “teaching after learning”. And the time of teaching and discussion is displaced. Even for each lesson, there is an example of its time distribution pattern, namely “10+20+10” (ten minutes for teacher’s presentation, 20 minutes for students’ discussion, and 10 minutes for teacher’s summary and feedback).

3.1.3. Improving students’ autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities

PAD Class Model emphasizes that students are the center of the teaching process, while teachers are just the teaching guider and organizer. Under the specific classroom teaching design and arrangement made by the teacher, students can not only have sufficient time to do independent learning, but also more opportunities to participate and share in group discussion, which can improve students’ autonomous learning ability and critical thinking ability has been illustrated and researched over and over again by many scholars in China, researchers found that students’ ability had been improved.

3.2. Challenges of the Application of PAD Class Model in College English Classroom Teaching

In addition to the various advantages the writer has mentioned in the previous part about college English teaching under the guidance of PAD Class Model, there are certain challenges when integrating this class mode into teaching practice of college English curriculum.

3.2.1. How to integrate lecture with discussion

The major characters of the success or failure of the classroom practice are teachers’ teaching design and the control of the classroom activities. Although PAD Class Model is the separation of teaching and learning in order to deepen college English teaching reform, especially classroom reform, in which class time will be divided into two parts (while-class and after class), teachers need to consider how to separate as well as combine lecture with discussion in the teaching process. On the one hand, in order to help students understand teaching objectives and accomplish the required assignment, teachers need to control the presenting time and method. On the other hand, in order to cultivate students’ abilities, teachers need to think about how to make the most of the discussion session. But the key of adopting PAD Class Model is not to separate lecture and discussion totally, but to separate them in time allocation, and then combine them in sequence and content.

3.2.2. How to strike a balance between teaching efficiency and ability building

Under PAD Class Model, classroom teaching time for teachers is reduced, student-centered teaching is emphasized. Teachers’ explanation mainly focuses on the difficulties and key points of this lesson, while students are required to learn independently after class.
should be noted is that teachers’ presentation has to pave ways for students’ assimilation and discussion. The quality of teachers’ explanation is closely related to the effect of students’ assimilation after class, as well as the depth and efficiency of the discussion. Students’ autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities could not be cultivated and developed within a short time or without detailed and well-directed guidance. How to strike a balance between these two goals is a big challenge.

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDY

Since its first introduction to college classroom teaching in 2014, PAD Class Model has aroused a lot of attention from scholars and teachers around China. As a new and localized classroom teaching mode, PAD Class Model has been proved to be effective and successful. The center of the teaching process has been shifted from teachers to students, with time allocation in class being optimized, TTT (teacher talking time) being shortened, and students’ autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities being practiced and enhanced. However, PAD Class Model needs to be perfected and developed in practice, so as to better guide teaching practice and improve classroom teaching. As an application-oriented university, reform on classroom teaching of college English curriculum in Kunming University needs to be put on the agenda. Taking this as an opportunity, PAD Class Model can be integrated into classroom teaching. Based on examples and experience from the previous studies, the following questions could be conducted in future research. Firstly, we need to see which kind of PAD Class Model is most applicable to the classroom teaching of college English curriculum in Kunming University, given the fact that PAD Class Model can be divided into in-class PAD Class Model, cross-class PAD Class Model, and mixed-class PAD Class Model. Secondly, we can optimize some of the operation steps of PAD Class Model based on the characteristics of college English teaching in Kunming University.

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