

An Empirical Study of Enjoyment in College English PAD Class in China

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Abstract: The effect of positive emotions in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has attracted the attention of researchers influenced by the Positive Psychology. As one of the most prevalent positive emotions, enjoyment is the most studied in SLA research recently. Based on this, the current study conducted a survey of 282 non-English majors from a university in southern China through questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to investigate the degree of enjoyment in college English PAD Class (Presentation-Assimilation-Discussion). The data of the questionnaire were described and analyzed using SPSS statistical software and the interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis as a method. The results show that students of PAD Class have a relatively high degree of classroom enjoyment in terms of teacher support and peer support. The advanced teaching concept adopted in PAD Class has certain enlightening significance for teaching reform.

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning, Enjoyment, PAD Class, College English

1. Introduction

College English is an important part of our higher education. For many years, college English classroom teaching has been criticized by the academic community for its outdated teaching concepts and depressing classroom atmosphere. The emergence of PAD teaching model provides a new breakthrough for college English teaching reform. With its novel teaching concept, clear teaching objectives, flexible teaching approaches, highly structured teaching process and scientific teaching evaluation standards and methods, this new teaching model has achieved satisfactory results in college English classroom practice across China. Numerous teaching practices show that PAD teaching model can not only effectively stimulate students' learning motivation and reduce students' language anxiety, but also fully mobilize students' enthusiasm for active learning, strengthen the interaction between teachers and students, stimulate students' interest in learning, and improve the effectiveness of college English classroom teaching (Zhang, 2014, 2017; Cheng, 2019; Mai, 2022) ^{[1] [2] [3] [4]}. However, few previous studies have demonstrated it from an empirical point of view. In recent years, domestic and foreign scholars have found that enjoyment is a significant factor affecting students' foreign language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Li & Han, 2022) ^{[5] [6] [7]}, because enjoyment can not only reduce the anxiety of language learners, but also enable learners to actively explore and apply various learning strategies for learning, thus effectively improving their academic performance. This study will explore the students' performance of enjoyment in college English PAD Class from the perspective of positive psychology, so as to expand the research perspective of positive emotion in this mode of teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Study of Enjoyment

Enjoyment refers to the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction generated during an activity (Ainley & Hidi, 2014) ^[8]. Enjoyment is a key component of the concept of flow, which refers to a state of mind in which you are fully engaged in an activity without being influenced by the outside world. Researchers believe that flow can effectively improve students' interest in foreign language learning and foreign language ability (Egbert, 2004) ^[9]. As the most common and significant positive emotion in foreign language learning, enjoyment is also a significant psychological motivation factor to improve learners' classroom

concentration and achievement (Li & Wei, 2022)^[10]. Unlike happiness, enjoyment is a complex emotion that is achieved through effort, while happiness is only a temporary pleasurable feeling. When individuals have enjoyment, it enhances their ability to focus, perseverance, and resilience in the face of difficulties. Enjoyment in language learning can help second language learners better process and acquire the target language (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018)^[6]. Jin and Zhang (2019)^[11] found that students' attitude towards foreign language learning, interaction with peers and teachers, and classroom environment are the main factors that lead to enjoyment.

2.2 PAD Class

PAD Class is a new teaching model proposed by Zhang in 2014. It consists of three major stages, namely Presentation, Assimilation, and Discussion. In PAD Class, the teacher would present materials concisely. Students then have time for individual and independent study, to reflect upon what has been taught, to read the textbook and to write out what they learned. Finally, they form small groups of 4-6 students each, and discuss what they have learned. In the discussion, they help each other and leave difficult problems to the teacher. With the emphasis on assimilation, the PAD Class integrates the lecturing paradigm and the discussion paradigm into a new one which has the pros of both but none of their cons (Zhang, 2017)^[2]. PAD Class emphasizes the process evaluation and pays attention to the different learning needs of students. Chen and Chen (2017)^[12] proposed that PAD is "student-centered", rather than "learning-centered" or "teaching-centered". It emphasizes the "substantive meaning of division", "free from time proportion" and "sequence of process implementation".

2.3 Enjoyment in SLA

The research on enjoyment is still in its initial stage. At present, domestic and foreign researchers' studies on enjoyment mostly focus on: 1) The verification of enjoyment measurement tools. For example, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014)^[5] compiled a five-level scale containing 21 items, and the verified enjoyment scale mainly includes four dimensions: learning experience, classroom atmosphere, peers and teachers. Jin and Zhang (2019)^[11] recruited 384 high school students from three middle schools in two provinces of China as research objects and compiled a five-level scale containing 16 items. The verified dimensions mainly included English learning, teacher support and peer support. 2) The influence of enjoyment on foreign language learning. Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018)^[6] argued that enjoyment has an important impact on foreign language learning and is closely related to students' foreign language performance. Students with lower academic performance reported less enjoyment. 3) The role of enjoyment and anxiety in the foreign language classroom. For example, domestic and foreign studies have found that both enjoyment and anxiety exist in the foreign language classroom, and the degree of enjoyment is higher than that of language anxiety (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019)^[13]. De Smet et al. (2018)^[14] compared the anxiety and enjoyment in CLIL and non-CLIL teaching mode, and the study showed that the anxiety of students in CLIL teaching mode was significantly lower than that in non-CLIL teaching mode, and CLIL could significantly improve the enjoyment of students in foreign language learning. 4) Factors affecting learners' enjoyment in foreign language classroom. Dewaele et al. (2017)^[15] pointed out that the factors affecting enjoyment mainly include positive attitudes towards the foreign language, the foreign language teacher, a lot of foreign language use by the teacher in class and so on. Dewaele & Dewaele (2017)^[16] also found that enjoyment is influenced by gender.

To sum up, there is still relatively little research on enjoyment at home and abroad, and even less relevant research to verify classroom enjoyment under specific teaching model. In view of the importance and positive impact of enjoyment on foreign language teaching, this study attempts to explore the degree of enjoyment in PAD Class, hoping to have an in-depth understanding of the practical application effect of this teaching model.

3. Research Method

3.1 Participants

In this study, participants were 282 college students from a normal university in the southern area of China (male, n = 121; female, n = 155; n = 6 without indication of gender). English is a required subject in this university. The participants were undergraduate sophomores majoring in non-English disciplines, such as business administration, computer science, politics and law, electrical engineering and international education of Chinese language, which ensured the consistency of the participants' grades

and the diversity of majors. The classes investigated in this study were intensive reading and writing courses in which the students got involved in indifferent kinds of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities.

3.2 Instrument

In this study, the English classroom enjoyment scale prepared by Jin and Zhang (2019) ^[11] was adopted. Each questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is the basic information of the respondents, including gender, age and major. The second part is multiple-choice questions which mainly examine the students' enjoyment of PAD Class from three dimensions, namely, enjoyment of teacher support, enjoyment of English learning and enjoyment of student support. Likert-type five-point scale was used to measure the questionnaire items, from 1 to 5 representing very disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree and very agree. The measured reliability Cronbach α of the three variables in the questionnaire reached 0.84, 0.79 and 0.86, which ensured the reliability of the survey results.

4. Results and Discussion

In the questionnaire, students had to make their choice from 1 to 5 for each of the 16 questions to give their comments on enjoyment of PAD Class. In this study, the average and standard deviation of the scores for each item in the questionnaire were counted (see Table 1 for the results), trying to evaluate PAD Class from the three levels of enjoyment of teacher support, English learning and student support. The means of items in the subscales of enjoyment of teacher support and student support are all above 4 points except items 3 and 13, which shows that students agree and are satisfied with the enjoyment provided by teacher and peer support in PAD Class. As for the subscale of enjoyment of English learning, the means of 9 items are all below 4 points, which shows that PAD Class has not yet fully stimulate students' enjoyment in learning English as the researchers expected.

Table 1: Description and statistical results of each item in the questionnaire

Subscales	No.	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Enjoyment of Teacher Support	7	The teacher is encouraging.	4.02	0.712	4.03	0.435
	9	The teacher is friendly.	4.01	0.731		
	14	The teacher is supportive.	4.07	0.756		
Enjoyment of English Learning	1	I can be creative.	3.68	0.941	3.50	0.478
	2	I don't get bored.	3.46	0.946		
	4	I enjoy it.	3.54	0.840		
	6	I feel as though I'm a different person during the FL class.	3.40	0.896		
	10	I learnt to express myself better in the FL.	3.43	0.999		
	11	I'm a worthy member of the FL class.	3.44	0.875		
	12	I've learnt interesting things.	3.50	0.901		
	15	In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.	3.46	0.883		
	16	It's fun.	3.57	0.818		
Enjoyment of Student Support	3	The peers are nice.	3.77	0.948	3.93	0.480
	5	We form a tight group.	4.02	0.835		
	8	We have common legends, such as running jokes.	4.01	0.735		
	13	We laugh a lot.	3.93	0.807		

A quick look at the overview of the effects in Table 1 shows that the level of enjoyment in the classroom was relatively high ($M=3.82$). From the dimensions of teacher support ($M = 4.03$) and student support ($M = 3.93$), PAD Class provides students with good teacher support and peer support. This result supports the existing studies (e.g., Zhang, 2014; Cheng, 2019; Mai, 2022), which believe that PAD Class has the advantages of enhancing students' initiative in English learning and promoting the communication between students and teachers. It is proved that the teaching concept of PAD is consistent with the teaching practice. In other words, PAD Class not only fully reflects the dominant position of teachers and students, but also promotes the interaction between teachers and students. Compared to the traditional

classroom teaching which over-emphasizes the authority of the teacher, PAD Class brings democratic, dialogic, open and free atmosphere to the class, and therefore makes the class be more harmonious, comfort, full of fun and full of vitality (Zhang, 2017)^[2]. In the interview, some students mentioned that there was "no tension" in the English class, and the most enjoyable thing for them is "showing and sharing with classmates". Peer interaction was mentioned most frequently as the source of enjoyment. One student commented on how peer interaction helped him to learn English: "During peer interaction, I can exchange my ideas with different classmates. I can also learn from others and broaden my mind." As Zhang (2016)^[17] pointed out that in PAD Class, the discussion stage aims to cultivate students' cooperative learning ability, which reflects the Social Interaction Model and emphasizes information exchange and interpersonal interaction. PAD Class reconstructs the power and responsibility in the classroom, creating a more harmonious and democratic learning community of teachers and students.

However, from the dimension of enjoyment of English Learning ($M=3.50$), except for question 1, the mean values of other questions are all lower than 3.6. This result means that PAD Class needs to be strengthened in stimulating students' enjoyment in English learning. Some students mentioned in the interview that listening to the teacher's lecture in class was more helpful to their study than group discussion, because the group members' English proficiency was relatively low and they failed to put forward valuable ideas and solutions. In addition, due to the influence of "face" culture in China, some introverted students were reluctant to participate in class discussions, and their motivation for English learning was slowly fading. "My biggest fear is that the teacher will ask us to answer questions by name. I don't want to lose face in front of my classmates," one student said in the interview. "As Arnold (2011)^[18] pointed out that having a positive emotional atmosphere in a foreign language classroom is particularly crucial as learners' self-image is vulnerable and fear of losing face in front of classmates and teacher can be daunting. Therefore, the foreign language teacher needs to use non-threatening techniques in order to create a positive learning experience. This involves supporting and promoting group solidarity and creating an emotionally safe classroom environment where linguistic experimenting is encouraged (Borg, 2006; Dewaele, 2015)^[19] ^[20]. The key of success of PAD practice lies in more praise and encouragement towards the backward students (Zhang, 2017)^[2]. To improve students' enjoyment of English learning in PAD Class, teachers need to change their teaching concepts, improve their own professional level, carefully design the teaching content and organize classroom activities according to the students' practical level rather than rigidly adhere to the textbooks or syllabus.

5. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed and analyzed the college English PAD Class from the perspective of classroom enjoyment. Through the analysis of the collected data, students of PAD Class are satisfied with the classroom enjoyment, especially in terms of teacher support and peer support. This shows that PAD teaching mode can not only scientifically deal with the relationship between teaching and learning, teacher and student, student and student, but also help to create a warm and harmonious classroom atmosphere and cultivate students' team spirit and cooperation ability. In order to further improve the degree of enjoyment in PAD Class, the author suggests that teachers should make timely adjustments in college English teaching according to the teaching content, teaching progress, teaching environment and students' reactions and avoid mechanically adhering to the textbooks or syllabus. As an innovative mode of local teaching, the PAD provides a new way of thinking for our country's higher education teaching reform. It is hoped that there will be more empirical studies on this teaching mode from the perspective of its concept and practice in the future, so as to further deepen the reform of college English teaching.

Acknowledgements

This paper and the study are funded by: Fund Project 1: Research project of Zhanjiang City philosophy and social science "A Study of College English Classroom Ecology Based on the Theory of Ecological Affordance (Project No.: ZJ22YB100); Fund Project 2: Research and Practice on the Classroom Teaching Reform of College English Extended Course Group Based on PAD Class Mode.

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