

# Research on Flipped Class Teaching Mode of English Major Courses

## Taking the Theory of Diaspora as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

Flipped class is a new pattern of class teaching mode in recent years, which is very different from the traditional class. This paper first discusses the connotation and characteristics of flipped class from four aspects: class form, teacher's role, learning mode and class interaction. Then, taking the diaspora theory as an example, it focuses on the advantages and problems of flipped class teaching mode in English major courses.

**Keywords:** *Flipped class, English major courses, Teaching mode, Diaspora theory.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Flipped class is a new class teaching mode in recent years. The model originated from two American teachers, Jonathan Berman and Alan Sams. They combine synchronous explanation with PPT demonstration in the form of video, and then upload the video to the Internet for students to learn. In 2011, Salman Khan founded the Khan Academy and uploaded more than 3500 teaching videos on the website, which attracted the attention of educators. Flipped class is the product of the combination of computer science and technology and teaching, which is the crystallization of the times and creativity. Nowadays, flipped class is becoming more and more familiar to everyone, and it has become an important teaching strategy in the field of education. English teachers have begun to explore the application of flipped class in language teaching. This paper aims to explore the advantages and problems of flipped class teaching mode in professional English teaching.

## 2. CONNOTATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FLIPPED CLASS

The connotation of flipped class is rich, which is essentially different from the traditional class. This difference is embodied in four aspects: the change of class form, the change of teachers' role, the change of learning mode and the change of class interaction. These four differences show that the flipped class has a qualitative leap in the times, technology and advanced concepts compared with the traditional class.

### 2.1 The Change of Class Form

The traditional class is first "in-class teaching and learning" and then "learning after class", while the flipped class is first "pre-class learning" and then "in-class research". Teachers create online videos before class for students to watch and learn after class, and then students return to class with questions to communicate and discuss with students and teachers face to face. Therefore, the class form has changed from the traditional "class teaching and then homework" to the flipped "pre-class learning and in-class research".

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## **2.2 The Change of Teacher's Role**

In the traditional class, teachers are the imparters of knowledge, shouldering the most important task of knowledge input; flipped class changes the role of teachers, making them the promoter and guide of learning. In the traditional class, the teacher is as the knowledge transmission tube, and most of the time in the class, the teacher instills massive knowledge into the students. In the flipped class, the teacher assigns the teaching video and related learning resources to the students before class, and the students need to actively check, collect and sort out the information in the learning process. In this process, the teacher provides the necessary online support. Therefore, teachers become scaffolding for students to acquire resources, use resources, process information and apply knowledge to real situations. In the real class, teachers organize students to discuss what they have learned, and answer questions to help students further deepen their understanding of knowledge and correct the misunderstanding of knowledge in the process of self-study.

## **2.3 The Change of Learning Mode**

In the traditional class, students are the object of passive acceptance of knowledge, but flipped class promotes students' active learning and research. Students can choose their own learning time, place, resources, progress, etc. they can also choose the most suitable learning tools according to their own learning style, adjust the progress of learning, and truly become the center and main body of learning. With the help of teaching videos, network resources, books resources, teachers and students, students can contact knowledge in many aspects, understand knowledge in an all-round way, and deepen their comprehensive mastery of knowledge.

## **2.4 The Change of Class Interaction**

In the traditional class, the teacher is the main questioner and the student is the responder. Moreover, limited by the tense class time, teachers cannot give students enough time to think about what they have learned and ask questions, so the class interaction is weak. Flipped class gives students enough time to study before class, so that students have an overall understanding of knowledge and come back to the class with problems to communicate and discuss with teachers and students. Because of sufficient preparation before class, students can freely express their

opinions in the communication, breaking the "silence" phenomenon in the traditional class.

## **3. THE THEORY OF DIASPORA**

Diaspora theory is an interdisciplinary theory of culture, society and economy developed in the 1990s under the background of economic globalization. It mainly studies identity politics, naturalization, dual consciousness and other issues. As far as the current research focus is concerned, identity and identity issues are the core content of diaspora theory. The formation, development and definition of cultural identity and cultural identity in the theory of diaspora is itself a kind of historical and cultural "root seeking", a reflection on ethnic migration, symbiosis, conflict and integration in human history, and a cross-ethnic, cross-national and cross-cultural study. Diaspora has three different dimensions of consciousness and characteristics: physical diaspora, psychological diaspora and cultural diaspora. Compared with physical diaspora, psychological and cultural diaspora is more worthy of our study. It is especially applied to African black, Chinese and other ethnic minorities with obvious characteristics of ethnic dispersion.

## **4. THE ADVANTAGES OF FLIPPED CLASS TEACHING MODE IN ENGLISH MAJOR COURSES**

Since the rise of education, scholars are keen to study teaching mode and bring forth new ones. However, many late developing teaching forms can't stand the test of time and practice, and have gone from rise to decline. Whether flipped class, a derivative teaching mode born in the information age, can shoulder the heavy burden of teaching reform, has also aroused the doubts of scholars. This requires us to objectively analyze its advantages and existing problems. Flipped class from small-scale rise to the promotion and application of globalization shows that the teaching mode has obvious advantages and value of teaching application, this paper summarizes from the following three aspects.

### **4.1 Flipped Class Can Improve Students' Learning Initiative and Thinking Ability**

In the traditional English major courses, the teacher is the leading role in the class and controls the teaching rhythm. The teacher's teaching of

vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar creates a dull and boring class atmosphere and inhibits students' initiative in English class. Taking the teaching of the theory of diaspora theory as an example, the theory involves the issues of identity politics, which are sensitive and abstract. If the traditional teaching mode is followed, teachers need to take into account each student's cultural background, psychological state, the current political environment, and the understanding of metalanguage itself. Due to the limited class time, most of the students cannot fully think and internalize, and agree with the content of the teacher, so the learning effect is not ideal.

In contrast, flipped class teaching focuses on students, pays attention to students' differences and personality development, makes students change from the traditional object of passive acceptance of knowledge to the subject of English class, and transfers the process of knowledge teaching from in-class to pre-class. In the pre-class learning, students can deeply think about their own values and outlook on life by watching the videos produced by teachers, consulting the network and books and other rich learning channels, and personalize the definition of diaspora on the basis of self-identity and cultural identity, so as to get rid of the boring textbook learning and no longer be limited by the rigid textbook content, which can greatly improve their self-confidence in English learning. Students can decide whether to play back or pause the video according to their acceptance of new knowledge, so as to make the process of knowledge transfer more free and individualized. Students have a holistic cognition of knowledge through autonomous learning before class, and then come back to class with questions and thinking to realize the internalization of knowledge. Through the communication with other students, enrich the understanding of the theory of diaspora, deepen the cognition, teachers should guide students to establish a correct outlook on life and values in the class discussion, in the process of knowledge internalization, make students truly digest knowledge, correct identity of personal cultural identity.

#### ***4.2 Flipped Class Can Establish a Harmonious and Friendly Relationship Between Teachers and Students***

In the traditional English major classes, the teacher is the center of the class. Teachers have a

dominant position in the class, while students are in a subordinate position. Most of the students who have been studying English for more than ten years are still afraid of criticism. This kind of inequality between teachers and students greatly hinders the students' consciousness and way of thinking of speaking and using English, resulting in the consequences of dumb English, and also makes English out of the instrumental nature. In contrast, flipped class makes the roles of teachers and students "flipped" to a certain extent. The class is "student-centered", students change from "passive receiver of knowledge" to "active researcher of knowledge", teachers change from "instigator of knowledge" to "guide of knowledge". Class activities in flipped class provide teachers and students with more opportunities for two-way communication, create a multi-dimensional interactive communication mechanism between teachers and students, students and students, enhance the emotional communication between teachers and students, and build a harmonious and friendly relationship between teachers and students. The reason why flipped class is conducive to the reconstruction of harmonious teacher-student relationship is that first of all, teachers let students choose independent inquiry topics according to their own interests, guide students to construct knowledge system through real tasks, and truly achieve student-centered. Second, teachers divide students into groups according to their characteristics, and allocate inquiry topics for group teaching, organize the inquiry activities of the group, and the group members complete the learning task through communication and co-operation. A good teacher-student relationship can become the spiritual motivation for students to overcome setbacks in the learning process, help students face the learning pressure healthily, and improve the learning effect.

#### ***4.3 Flipped Class Can Promote the Effective Use of Teaching Resources***

Uneven distribution of educational resources and regional differences in teaching quality are long-standing problems in many countries and regions. The emergence of flipped class, to a certain extent, provides a better solution to this problem that has plagued the education sector for a long time. Professional English has deep requirements for language, not only limited to vocabulary, sentence pattern and grammar, but also pays more attention to the cultivation of students' English cultural literacy and the training of

students' English thinking ability. Still taking the theory of diaspora as an example, the cultural identity, identity and other issues involved in the theory are undoubtedly obscure and difficult. It is very difficult to carry out critical learning and form personalized cognition in class without collecting relevant information in advance and full thinking before class. Thanks to the development of network information technology, colleges and universities all over the world share high-quality English education resources on the Internet. Teachers can select and integrate resources closely related to teaching, and integrate them into micro video for students' autonomous learning. And students can also integrate teaching resources in advance to find their own entry point. In a word, flipped class for the reorganization and allocation of educational resources is incomparable to the traditional teaching mode.

## **5. THE PROBLEMS OF FLIPPED CLASS TEACHING MODE IN ENGLISH MAJOR COURSES**

Flipped class, as a product of information technology, is a big impact on the traditional class. For any new teaching mode, the road from rise, development to maturity is tortuous, which needs constant trial and error, discussion and improvement. In addition, flipped class is a new teaching mode introduced from the United States. Whether it is suitable for China's current educational situation and educational practice, and whether it can be widely promoted and applied, is also a question worth pondering.

### ***5.1 It Is Difficult to Change Teachers' Teaching Concept in a Short Time***

In the traditional English teaching process, most teachers still adhere to the teaching concept that teachers impart knowledge in class and students internalize knowledge after class. Flipped class subverts this traditional concept and changes the roles of teachers and students in the class. The teacher changes from the superior knowledge giver to the common communicator around the students, from dominating the class to guiding the class. This change of teaching concept and teachers' class orientation makes it difficult for some teachers to accept in a short time. On the issue of teaching the theory of diaspora, teachers can no longer help students to establish a correct outlook on life and values, but guide students to understand the relevant issues correctly. It seems that the authority

of teachers has been weakened. It is a challenge to the psychological construction of teachers. In addition, flipped class was introduced in China at the end of 2011. The number of schools and teachers adopting this mode is still small, and there is no sufficient valuable lesson as a model. For the vast majority of professional English teachers, trying flipped class is not only full of challenges, but also makes them feel lack of confidence.

### ***5.2 The Information Technology Ability of Teachers Needs To Be Improved***

Flipped class requires teachers to make the corresponding teaching micro video before class. In the process of production, resources need to be screened, integrated and processed. In order to increase the interest and richness of the video, it may also need to insert animation, modify pictures, edit subtitles and so on. These corresponding information technologies are not available to every teacher, or even the vast majority of professional English teachers. Therefore, if we want to truly realize the flipped class, schools should first set up teachers' information technology ability training courses, especially the skills of micro video production.

### ***5.3 It Is Difficult to Guarantee the Self-study Process of Students Before Class***

The important premise of flipped class is that students learn knowledge independently before class, and then come back to the class with corresponding problems and thinking. All these arrangements are based on students' good autonomous learning ability. The students with strong consciousness can learn the course content through the teaching video, find their own questions in the exercises before class, and arrange their learning time reasonably. Because students are separated from the regulated class during self-study, they can study at home or even in other outdoor places, so teachers cannot guarantee the length and quality of students' learning. Students with poor self-consciousness may waste their time in online games, online shopping and even chasing TV dramas. Especially in the face of such obscure theories as the theory of diaspora. In this way, the disconnection of students in the knowledge input link will directly affect the class communication, and the flipped class cannot be carried out. Therefore, how to ensure students' self-learning process, or how to improve students' awareness of

self-learning has become another big problem in the implementation of flipped class.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Flipped class teaching mode is the product of the information age and an advanced teaching mode introduced from abroad. Flipped class can promote students' autonomous learning and thinking, help to establish a good relationship between teachers and students, and reasonably integrate and optimize teaching resources, which are incomparable advantages of traditional class. However, as far as the current educational reality is concerned, teachers' traditional teaching concept is strong, and their information quality needs to be improved. In addition, in the process of implementation, the mode lacks the guarantee mechanism for students' self-learning process. These factors are the bottleneck of the implementation of flipped class in China. Therefore, flipped class is both an opportunity and a challenge for China's education reform. How to meet the challenge, grasp the opportunity, and make the flipped class suitable for China's national conditions and for China's education, is the problem that the majority of educators should think about together.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Bei Gao wrote the manuscript, and Weiyuan Zhang contributed to revising and editing.

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