

Feng Chia University

Outstanding Academic Paper by Students

Title : How to Improve Taiwan's High School English Education: Take
Courses of Foreign Languages and Literature Department in Feng Chia
University for Example

如何改善台灣高中英文教育：以逢甲大學外文系課程為例

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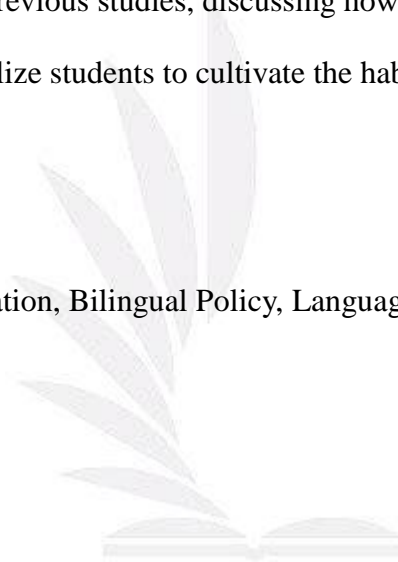
Academic Year: Semester 1, 2020



Abstract

Due to the bilingual policy, this study aims to discuss the condition of high school English education. As English majors, we are wondering if there are ways that could make a difference in the present situation about English teaching and learning. Most students have exposed to English since they were in kindergarten, but why Taiwan's English proficiency seems to remain stagnant. Therefore, in this study, we are not only going to see what undergraduate students can do to help achieving the goal of bilingual policy, but also how they can equip themselves with the ability in response to the policy. Also, motivation is the key to success in language learning. So, we will also take a look at previous studies, discussing how to trigger students' learning motivation to mobilize students to cultivate the habit of self-learning in daily life.

Keyword : English Education, Bilingual Policy, Language Learning, Course Design



摘要

由於雙語政策的實施，本研究旨在探討高中英語教育的狀況。作為外文系在學生，我們企圖想知道是否有什麼方法可以改善當前英語教育所面臨的困境。即使沒有此雙語政策的實施，大多數學生從幼稚園開始便接觸英語，有這麼久的學習經歷，為什麼台灣人普遍的英語水平似乎仍然停滯不前。因此，在這項研究中，我們不僅探討外文系學生在畢業後，能夠如何幫助實現雙語政策所期望達成的目標，並且更重要的是該如何使自己具備應對雙語政策的能力。此外，動機無疑是語言學習成功的關鍵。因此，我們也將進一步借鏡以前的研究，分析過往經驗是如何激發學生的學習動機，使學生養成在日常生活中自學語言的習慣。

關鍵字：英語教育、雙語政策、語言學習、課程設計

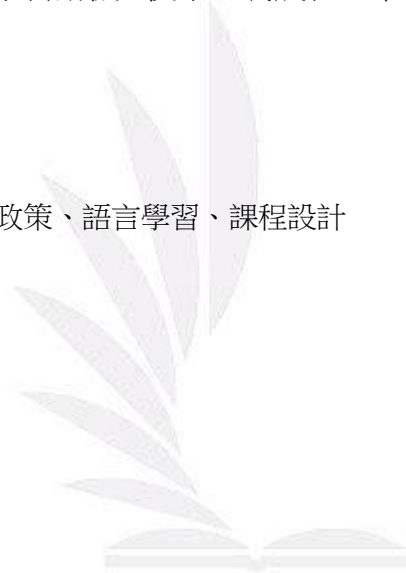


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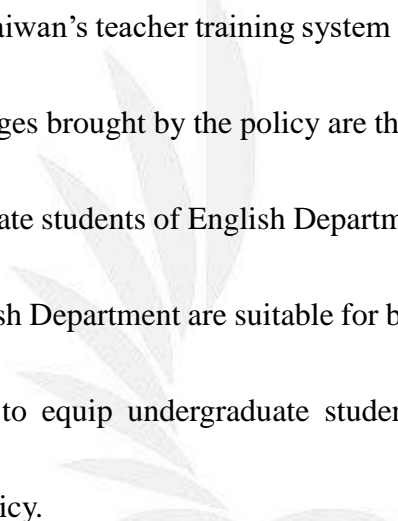
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1 Introduction

In the tide of globalization, international communication ability has become an indispensable part of improving the competitiveness of a country. In response to this trend, Lai Qingde, the former president of the Executive Yuan of Taiwan, announced the "Bilingual Nation Policy", hoping to develop Taiwan into a bilingual country by 2030.

However, whether Taiwan's teacher training system and the current teachers are ready to respond to the changes brought by the policy are the questions. Therefore, this study targets the undergraduate students of English Department, trying to find out what courses offered by the English Department are suitable for being applied to high school English teaching and how to equip undergraduate students with teaching skills in response to the bilingual policy.



Additionally, students' motivation is also the key to success in language learning. Under this circumstance, how to trigger students' learning motivation to mobilize students to cultivate the habit of self-learning in daily life is the issue we would like to investigate. Moreover, how to integrate "speaking" into the tests to achieve a balance among these four English skills is also worth investigation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English education policy

In the past, Taiwan clearly stated that it was only in the third grade of elementary school that they were able to start learning English, mainly to take into account the level of Chinese. Promoted by the bilingual policy, the government has relaxed the age of learning English, and the age of exposure to English and the policy has been revised down to accept English education from kindergarten. Obviously, the government has realized that the critical period of language learning (The Critical Period Hypothesis) and language nativism (Innatism) are interrelated. In short, the concept points out that if children are not allowed to learn the language naturally before the critical time point, it will become more difficult to learn the language when they grow up, and by then they will not be able to grasp it accurately. The most famous example is Victor (1799). Victor was found in the forest when he was 12 years old. In the past 12 years, he had no contact with human society at all. Even after five years of education, Victor had reached a certain level of social ability, judgment and memory, but his language ability was only slightly improved. Based on this real case, it can be concluded that learning the language before the critical period does indeed help the improvement of language ability to reach a native or near-native level. However, even though the government has not relaxed the standards, Taiwanese

parents never stop letting children learn English from childhood, and American schools have become popular in Taiwan. Even so, why have Taiwanese people not been able to achieve a certain level of English after they studied English for many years?

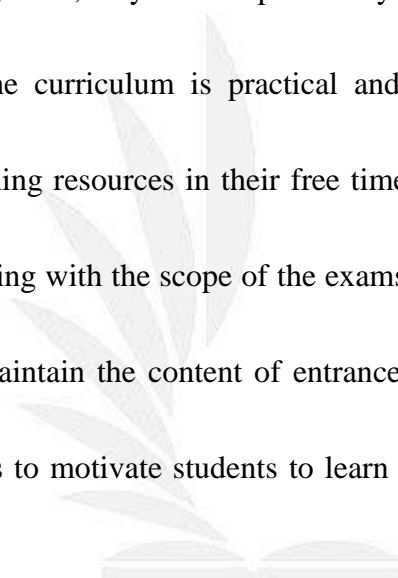
2.2 Obstacles of teaching resources

According to the study of Jao (2018), many teachers are unable to adapt themselves to bilingual education because of their poor English ability, fear of speaking English, lack of relevant teaching experience, and the pressure of further education, so they have to continue to focus on the content of the exams, which makes bilingual education finally fail. In addition to the bilingual policy, the teacher training program is also worth exploring. How do students in the English department take courses to equip themselves with the ability to respond to this policy in order to be able to integrate into bilingual teaching after graduation.

According to Wu (2015) research, the author integrated children and youth novels into high school English curriculum. In the process, students were guided in groups and finally selected a work for drama performance. The results of the study show that most students responded positively to the project. The students were interested in the content of the novel, and then they took the initiative to read after

school hours to cultivate the habit of learning English. This research outcome will be used as a foundation for the current study to help figure out which existing courses in the department of English are appropriate to be applied into high-school English curriculum.

In addition to supplemented course materials, the course design itself will also affect students' learning in class. Bong (2004) mentioned that when students foresee the value of learning tasks, they will adopt mastery-achievement goals. That is to say, if students think the curriculum is practical and interesting, students will actively look for extra learning resources in their free time to increase knowledge in this field instead of just coping with the scope of the exams. Therefore, it is still a big challenge for teachers to maintain the content of entrance examinations, but also to learn how to design courses to motivate students to learn English and cultivate their interests along the way.



3. Analysis & discussion

In this study, we designed a online survey to gather undergraduate students' advices toward high school English teaching and learning situation. We try to analyze what courses provide by the English department can be used to improve the situation of high school English learning and how do undergraduate students' consider the way

of teaching English in high school.

3.1 Design of the survey

This survey covers five questions, including two check questions and three descriptive questions. The first two questions basically investigate participants' learning situation, such as what grade are they in and what courses they have taken. For the rest of three descriptive question, we asked participants to narrate what and why courses they think can be applied in high school English learning and what do they think of the pros and cons on high school English teaching nowadays.

3.2 Participants and procedure

Participants were thirteen junior and senior students majoring in foreign languages and literature in Feng Chia University. In this study, we designed a set of questionnaire, in which the questions include what classes they have already taken in the department of foreign languages and literature, what they think about English education in senior high school in Taiwan, and what general courses that they have taken can be used to improve the high school English education. All the participants were asked to fill out the survey online.

3.3 Courses selected to be applied into high school English curriculum

Since the participants are junior and senior, they have already taken most of the courses provide by the English department. We analyze participants' replies on the pros and cons of high school English education in section 3.4. And in section 3.5, we gather students' students' advices on what courses and how can they be applied in high school English education.

3.4 Pros and cons of the high school English education

In terms of the merits, most of the participants mentioned that quizzes and practices help students lay a profound base in grammar and vocabulary. Even though they sound like cramming education, the participants think that pressure of preparing for quizzes and exams undoubtedly helps. Furthermore, some of the participants answered that guiding students analyze the sentence structures step by step is necessary and crucial, because in college, teachers seldom do this way.

On the other hand, in the aspects of the shortcomings, there are three major arguments. First of all, the majority of the participants mentioned that the teaching style in senior high school is too boring, rigid, and cramming. They think that teachers should apply a more creative and interesting teaching method in classes. This view is confirmed by Norin's (2018) who investigates the interactive way of teaching. The

results show that interactive teaching and learning help students master the knowledge better. Secondly, most of the participants stated that high school English education puts too much emphasis on exams, grammar, and memorizing articles, lacking oral and writing practices. Therefore, students have poor communication skill and are bad at writing. Thirdly, some participants mentioned that in senior high school, teachers place less focus on reading. They only keep doing the exercises again and again. Lack of reading skills makes students feel hard to comprehend the textbooks written in English when entering a college.

3.5 Courses used to apply in high school English classes

In this section, according to the chart below, we separate the courses into three parts that can help improving the current situation of English education in Taiwan's senior high schools.

3.5.1 Oral courses

Most of the participants mentioned that courses are related to oral practice, such as English pronunciation, English conversation and English debate, can be added into English classes in senior high school. In the study of Andrade (2011), the result show that rehearsal presentation helps grammar learning. However, the way teachers use to

teach grammar is memorizing and keeping on doing exercises until students have immerse sentence structures in their mind. Therefore, if oral courses can be applied in high school in teaching English, not only can students get the chance to enhance their speaking ability but also naturally absorb the grammar rules during the speaking process.

3.5.2 Reading courses

In the questionnaire, some of the students think that the following courses can be used to better the English classes in senior high school: English literature, journalistic English, and also business English. The participants say that literature courses give students extra reading which improves their reading ability and helps them get exposed to grammar, vocabulary words and English culture. Business English can teach students how to write a formal email. As for the journalistic English, participants consider it as a way to approach to vocabulary and the grammar pattern.

Based on the questionnaire, consider bringing some pieces of literature works in the appropriate level can certainly help senior high students' reading ability and extend the word volume. According to Shih (2018) who investigates whether bringing extensive reading into the Taiwanese junior college classroom is beneficial, the positive effects on students' reading ability were found and confirmed. Also,

according to Shih (2018) and Cheng (2003), by doing extensive reading, students learn how to guess words by the contexts, which is better for memorizing vocabulary words.

3.5.3 Writing courses

Some of the participants mentioned that senior high school can offer students a writing class, because teachers seldom teach students how to write a short essay until they are going to have the college entrance exam. Also, writing requires the using of vocabulary words and sentence structures. In this way, students have an extra opportunity to examine whether what they have learnt is absorbed by themselves.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the problems faced by the current general high school English education in Taiwan are: teaching methods are too rigid, grammatical patterns are inflexible, lack of spoken language and writing training. If the promotion of the bilingual policy can help improve the above-mentioned problems, it is necessary to provide teacher-related training courses for online teaching, which already have teaching qualifications. This article focuses on college-level courses to look into which courses can be applied to English courses in high schools. In addition to inputs

provided by students from the department of Foreign Languages and Literature, the design of courses from high school teachers' point of views is also worth exploring in future work.

According to the discussion of the participants, we can find that many courses in the department of Foreign Languages and Literature, such as literature, oral training, and writing courses, could be applied to the high school English classes. However, Wu (2005) points out that choosing the appropriate level of difficulty could be a challenge for teachers. Because students need to cope with the entrance examination on one hand; if the extra reading materials are too difficult, it will cause pressure on students and will make them escape from English on the other hand. Also, help students set a goal is crucial. Yang (1998) report that students tended to feel more motivated when they were asked to set a goal to learn English. For example, they could choose any topics they had interest in, and they were required to document their self-learning journal and interviewed with the teacher regularly.

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