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Drama Education Enhancing Multilingual Languages for Substation Learning in Taiwan

Educação Dramática para o Aumento de Línguas Multilíngues na Aprendizagem em Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Since 2018, the Taiwan government has issued the “Bilingual National Policy Blueprint”; most consider bilinguals as speaking Chinese and English. This policy of exclusively preferring English is very controversial in school education; not only do the professors of the English department, who seem to benefit from the policy have opinions, but some primary and secondary school teachers have changed bilingual education into EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) in class. In addition, representatives of the European Union and its member countries in Taiwan jointly wrote to the Executive Yuan to express their concern: the exclusive focus on English language will weaken the connection between Taiwan and European culture.

Bilingual education should be oriented towards multilingual education. Language learning must be integrated into life, learning in dialogue, situation, body, and emotion, just like the drama mode of young children playing make-believe. If this is the case, the Department of Linguistics could also add drama to make for a more “humanistic” in the use of language. When drama becomes an assistant, there is an additional layer of protection for students’ future work. It will naturally increase the number of students in the department so that drama and learning foreign languages coexist.

If teachers or college students in the Department of Foreign Language learn drama conventions along with the language, they can understand that studying in this Department is not only about learning languages but also drama and they can see how the Taiwanese opera or puppet shows relate to drama. Just as British students in Tudor ages, combined learning language with drama, it was natural to have drama in the English Literature curriculum. In short, the performing arts course in Taiwan is not only to learn what drama is but also to learn other disciplines through drama, not only to use the playing elements of drama but also to assist the communication skills of language learning. Therefore, learning drama and foreign languages in this model is a win-win and sustainable in the discipline.

Keywords: Drama Education; Bilingual Policy; Medieval Age; Drama Conventions

RESUMO

Desde 2018, o governo de Taiwan tem implementado a “Política Nacional Bilingue”, na qual a maioria considera o bilinguismo como o domínio do chinês e do inglês. Esta política que favorece exclusivamente o inglês tem sido muito controversa na educação escolar; não apenas os professores do departamento de inglês, que aparentemente beneficiam da política, têm opiniões a respeito, mas alguns professores do ensino primário e secundário têm transformado a educação bilíngue em EMI (Inglês como Língua de Instrução) na sala de aula. Além disso, representantes da União Europeia e dos seus países membros em Taiwan enviaram em conjunto uma carta ao Yuan Executivo para expressar a sua preocupação: o foco exclusivo na língua inglesa enfraquecerá a ligação entre Taiwan e a cultura europeia.

A educação bilíngue deve ser orientada para a educação multilíngue. A aprendizagem de línguas deve ser

integrada na vida, no diálogo, na situação, no corpo e na emoção, tal como no modo de teatro em que as crianças brincam ao faz de conta. Neste contexto, o Departamento de Linguística pode também incorporar o a educação dramática para uma utilização mais “humanística” da língua. Quando o teatro se torna um auxiliar, acrescenta-se uma camada adicional de proteção para o futuro trabalho dos estudantes. Isso naturalmente aumentará o número de estudantes no departamento, de forma que o teatro e a aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras coexistam.

Se os professores ou estudantes universitários do Departamento de Línguas Estrangeiras aprenderem as convenções do teatro juntamente com a língua, poderão compreender que estudar nesse departamento não se trata apenas de aprender línguas, mas também de aprender teatro, e podem constatar como a ópera taiwanesa ou os espetáculos de marionetas se relacionam com o teatro. Assim como os estudantes britânicos na época dos Tudor, que combinavam o estudo da língua com o teatro, é natural que esta arte faça parte do currículo de literatura inglesa. Em suma, o curso de artes performativas em Taiwan não se destina apenas a aprender o que é o teatro, mas também a aprender outras disciplinas através dele, não apenas a usar elementos de dramatização, mas também a auxiliar as competências de comunicação na aprendizagem de línguas. Portanto, aprender teatro e línguas estrangeiras neste modelo é uma situação vantajosa e sustentável para a disciplina.

Palavras-chave: Educação Dramática; Política Bilingue; Idade Medieval; Convenções do Drama.

Introduction

The “Bilingual National Policy Blueprint” was issued by the National Development Council of the Taiwan government in 2018 to achieve a bilingual country by 2030. National Development Council and the Ministry of Education coordinate all available resources actively with six main goals as follows (National Development Council, 2021):

1. Accelerating the development of bilingual higher education.
2. Optimizing bilingual conditions in a balanced manner for education at and below the senior high school level.
3. Developing digital learning.
4. Expanding the provision of affordable English proficiency test capacities.
5. Raising civil servants’ English proficiency.
6. Establishing an administrative body dedicated to policy promotion and implementation.

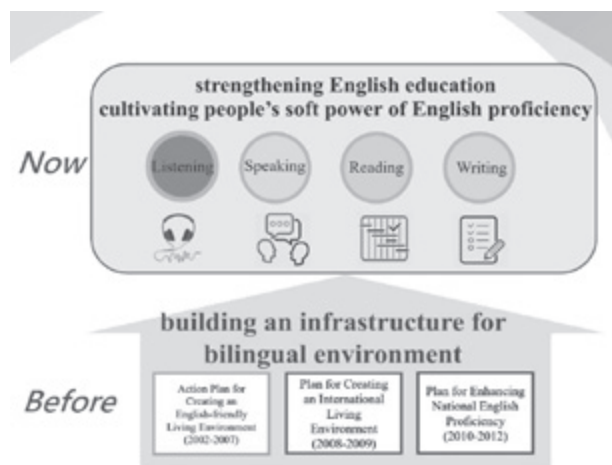


Figure 1 – Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030 (National Development Council, 2019)

According to the first and second points, exclusive English is very controversial in school education; not only do the professors of the English department who seem to benefit from the policy have opinions, but some primary and secondary school teachers have changed bilingual education into EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) in class. In addition, representatives of the European Union and its

member fifteen countries¹ in Taiwan jointly wrote to the Executive Yuan on 16 May 2022 to express their concern (Her, 2022):

While we share and support the policy's objectives (the need to strengthen Taiwan's competitiveness in the global economy), we fear that the promotion of English may come at a high cost to other languages and thus reduce Taiwan's cultural exposure outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere.

These nations are concerned exclusive English language will weaken the connection between Taiwan and European culture. On the other hand, more and more departments in the University encourage their professors to teach in English as a medium for every subject even in the Department of Chinese Literature (Xiu & Feng, 2022), so English departments become difficult to enroll new undergraduate students because its classes are everywhere as “water” which is not distinct in the university (Li, 2022). University, elementary and secondary schools have been actuated to implement “bilingual” teaching in Arts and other domains since 2019. As the result, most people consider that the bilinguals are Chinese and English speaking, and the most popular topic in preservice and in-service teacher training is how to teach arts in English.

This shows that bilingual education should be oriented towards multilingual education, and language learning must be integrated into life, learning in the form of dialogue, situation, body, and emotion, just like the drama mode of young children playing make-believe, which can not only help teachers teach foreign language but also allow students to immerse themselves into foreign cultures. If this is the

case, the Department of Linguistics would also add drama to make them more “humanistic” in the use of language. When drama becomes an assistant, there is an additional layer of protection for students' future work. It will naturally increase the number of students in the department so that drama and learning foreign languages coexist forever.

Research Method

This study aimed to discuss the conflicts between bilingual education and arts education as well as how to use drama-enhancing language learning. Document analysis is utilized as a research method that reviews and evaluates the relative documents and materials systematically.

In order to understand whether drama education can assist and implement the bilingual policy appropriately, the researcher examined documents from the government, academics, and schools, including meeting reports, advertising bulletins, lesson plans, teacher recruitment documents, news reports, and so on.

Researchers attempt to establish appropriate acting direction for teachers as close reading and delayed response through comparing and analyzing inconsistent implementing manners, education philosophies, teaching activities, and a few cases of teacher education and teacher professional development. The most crucial issue was to confirm the relationship between bilingual education and English class and clarify the role of including drama conventions in bilingual teaching.

¹ The fifteen European countries are: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden.

Drama Education Encouraging Students to Speak in Taiwan

Drama education in Taiwan, along with dance, is included in performing arts education and belongs to the domain of the arts; the emphasis on “interaction” (see Figure 1) in the *Curriculum Guidelines of 12-Year Basic Education: General Guidelines* means that teachers can use it more to allow students to communicate and interact with each other through practice (Ministry of Education, 2014). Communication requires the dramatic assistance of body language and vocal expression.

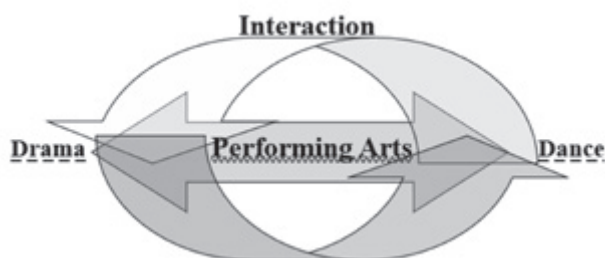


Figure 2 – Drama Education for Interaction

Moreover, in Taiwanese culture, young students are generally shy, so they must overcome anxiety or stage fright in learning languages, not to mention the rigid communication expectations of people in foreign languages. The researcher with years of teaching experience believes that “acting” can help students overcome this dilemma, as Gavin Bolton’s *Acting in Classroom: A Critical Analysis* (1999) suggests and reminds:

... in the classroom, many different kinds of acting behaviours go beyond the limits and responsibilities expected of a stage actor, while nevertheless including both ‘stage’ acting and that kind of acting behaviour associated

with ‘teacher-in-role’ led drama—which latter strategy I believe to be in grave danger of neglect in the present day dependence on too narrow a view of drama practice.

In his view, a teacher is unnecessary to be a “stage actor” with a character from a script but can be a “classroom actor” with a role; the difference between character and role is the first is a unique person or character with a name, the latter a common person with a title. Thus, Bolton uses Dorothy Heathcote’s term “Teacher-in-role,” one of the drama conventions: “evoking, not directing” (Wagner, 1999).

For example, when the sentence “Where is the tiger I am looking for?” shall be taught in class, the teacher could act as a “weak person” – or person with lower status – (Teacher-in-role) who could say the line as: “The tiger ate my father, who could help me to track it?” for evoking the students to act in a role of a “warrior” in the first person: “I” (in the role). The “I” has already played the role of “the other role with a title (warrior)” in which the student plays the “warrior” and might “shout” the line: “Where is the tiger I am looking for?” not only with braveness but with the accent on saying the words as they might speak in life. Hence what “s/he” (the student) does wrong is nothing to do with “the warrior,” we only care about whether “s/he” is interested in a foreign language (see Figure 2), and the speaking is not like a robot but a human being with intonation. In other words, using drama conventions (Teacher-in-role) for students focuses on speaking with confidence (Li, 2009).

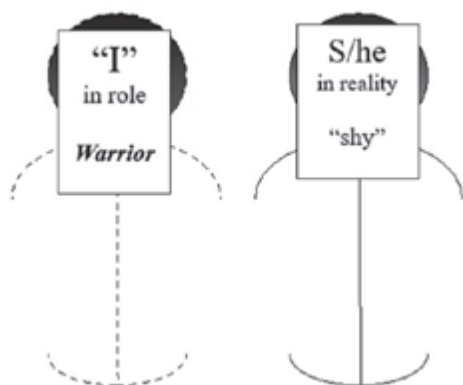


Figure 3 – Acting Help Speaking with Confidence

Reducing students' perception that "I" am making mistakes can encourage students to speak, which assists in learning with multilingual or translanguaging situations and improving the learning of foreign languages. As Lewis, Jones, & Baker (2012) consider:

the pedagogic nature of translanguaging in terms of language proficiency of children, developmental use in emergent bilinguals, variations in input and output, relationship to the subject/discipline curriculum, deepening learning through language development, cognitive development, and content understanding, and the role of children, including Deaf children, and in the use of translanguaging in educational activity.

Thus, activities can help students learn by rehearsing possibilities as well as basing on the teacher's evoking situation and then guiding the students into play. In the play, the students are allowed to make mistakes, just like playing a video game: "I'm just afraid you don't play, if you did play more you will obtain through games." If teachers or college students in the Department of Foreign Language can learn drama conventions alongside the language learning, this can make college students understand that studying in the Department of Foreign Languages is not only about learning languages but also the

Taiwanese opera or puppet shows in the same way that in Tudor times (1485-1603), British students were required to study Latin, so their teachers utilized drama activities for facilitating their instruction.

Department of English Integrated with Drama Art

The critiques from education professionals against the policy include (Lo, 2022):

1. Taiwan is a multi-language nation, thus not need to limit ourselves to be bilingual for English learning.
2. Bilingual teaching reduces the time of arts learning and weakens arts contents.
3. Recruitment test of teachers requires high level of English proficiency which screens out arts specialists.
4. There are several tracks to obtain bilingual teaching certificates without clear stipulation.
5. Hiring foreign teachers to co-teach arts is not so-called bilingual arts teaching.

Because Taiwanese schools and universities promote the bilingual policy mistakenly, enrollment has dwindled in English departments. Thus, I suggest using not only teaching in translanguaging but also affixing drama education in the department for one major with two studies: one in English literature; the other in drama. In other words, the two departments may be unified one as in Tudor's times, called "grammar school" in which drama was applied to Latin and English literature.

According to Howard Norland's (1995) point, the humanists in the early Tudor period introduced "a new dimension to drama ... brought from the Continent an enthusiasm for classical languages and learning", the use of drama as a way of teaching the Latin language. Michael Shapiro (2002) makes the

same point:

Many humanist educators of the period believed that their pupils might develop poise and improve their skill in speaking Latin by acting in dialogues or even in entire plays, either those by Plautus or Terence, or neo-Latin imitations of Roman comedy. Eventually some schoolmasters translated or adapted Roman comedies into English and some even wrote vernacular plays for their pupils.

Studying the dialogue of Plautus² and Terence's³ comedies was beneficial for learning Latin in Tudor times, so that we may use Bolton's broad way of acting to drama conventions for learning English or other languages in Taiwan. Jonothan Neelands (1990) argues:

The conventions recognize that theatre is not taught, rather that our own basic uses of theatre in play and other forms of imitative behaviour become refined and developed by experiencing increasingly complex relationships of convention and content. The conventions selected, therefore, form a bridge between spontaneous and innate uses of theatre and the more poetic conventions of performance craft. They are consciously associated with other familiar youth culture forms in order to stress the familiarity and pervasiveness of theatre.

Because dialogue was couched in the common language and was thus not only easier than poetry and prose, by using drama conventions it was also in practice more interesting for the students. Just like the British students in the Tudor ages, learning language combined with drama or theatre, it is natural to have drama in the English literature curriculum. Thus, drama can help students explore the world, be active in the curriculum, learn English with trans-/inter- other subjects, and study with practice so that

they would have a global view as world citizens.



Figure 4 – Drama Can Help from Schools to Global View

However, other countries separate drama from language resulting in the loss of the fun of learning foreign languages. In short, performing arts education in Taiwan is not only about learning what drama is but also about learning other disciplines through drama. That is to say to use the playing elements of drama and to assist the communication skills of language learning. Therefore, learning drama and foreign languages in this model is a win-win and sustainable in the discipline.



Figure 5 – Applied Drama Education for Departments of Languages

2 Plautus (c. 254-184 BC) was a Roman playwright.

3 Terence (c. 190-159 BC) was a Roman comic playwright.

Conclusion

Bilingual Nation 2030 policy aims to achieve the goals in a short time which triggers approval and disapproval propositions. Strategies provided by the Ministry of Education and National Development Council do not cover or respond to the questions mentioned above. A vacuous strategy or vision cannot lead to education. Education policymakers, scholars of teaching theory and curriculum, practitioners, and the public must recognize, judge, and take action to respond to the policy to clarify the misunderstanding of bilingual languages with arts teaching.

This study explores the methods of bilingual language teaching and drama conventions. The Bilingual policy does not inquire into and establish essential principles of teaching. However, these influential factors impact the implementation of curriculum guidelines, the definition of bilingual teaching, and the difficulty enrolling students in the Department of English Studies. The Ministry of Education means seeing the policy's immediate effect but needs direction. Thus, the policy changes the essence of arts education and blurs its goal and curriculum philosophy.

Teachers are the foundation for implementing curriculum and assessment. From the action of the Ministry of Education and implementation of schools, we find bilingual teaching is something other than something teachers can suit the action to the words and simply teach in both Mandarin and English. Different languages represent different mindsets that further comprehend the curriculum in a specific cultural context. As a result, drama elements can help the government reduce the problem because their conventions would evoke students to explore, link, investigate, and interact with others in

the learning environment, especially with languages, as Aristotle's term "human in action." This is the advantage of drama that will enhance multilingual languages for substitution learning in Taiwan.



Figure 6 – The Advantage of Drama Education

Teacher professional development and teacher education for bilingual teaching should include multilingual training and drama conventions. The immediate reaction of schools to bilingual policy is dangerous and leads to unknown results. In Taiwan, performing arts education can teach the content of drama and utilize drama to teach disciplines in universities and schools. People are interested in speaking a new language is more important than forcing them to listen to a language they do not know. Therefore, learning drama and foreign languages in schools are a win-win and sustainable in the discipline.

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