

The Classroom Observation of Bilingual Schools in America and New Taipei City

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This study aims to discuss the differences of the class observation of bilingual school in America and New Taipei City. In this educational visit, the researcher was able to observe two bilingual schools, and had the chance to experience American teaching styles and strategies for language learners. Moreover, the researcher has worked in the bilingual experimental school for almost four years. The working experience urges the researcher to keep seeking multiple teaching strategies and reinforce personal professional development. Therefore, this study is going to explore the development of the bilingual experimental schools in New Taipei City, the observation of The Josiah Quincy Elementary School and Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School, and the comparison between the researcher's school and the two American schools. Finally, it is the reflection of this educational visit.

1. The Development of the Bilingual Experimental Schools in New Taipei City

To cope with the globalization and internationalization, the Education Department of New Taipei City Government has established many projects and programs to motivate the English teaching environment. For instance, the education department has executed the bilingual experimental curriculum in fourteen elementary schools since 2013. Especially the administration brought in the foreign teachers to expect that the foreign teachers would elaborate the education quality, and there would be a good collaboration between the foreign teachers and the local teachers. (Education Department, New Taipei City Government, 2016)

Nevertheless, it seemed that there were some myths among bilingual programs. The bilingual schools had looked for some solutions. For instance, the schools decided to integrate the CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) methodology

into the bilingual curriculum. They tried to set up the teaching communities to support each other, and held the workshops for the school communities.

As an English teacher to work in one of the bilingual experimental schools, it is very challenging to develop our own curriculum every year, especially we have to take the cross-cultural collaboration into consideration. Different teaching visions and styles are double-edged sword, they either make perfect collaboration or destroy the relationship between foreign and local teachers. Our school is under the stage of developing our school-based bilingual experimental curriculum, it would be a good opportunity to take a look at different teaching models abroad, and bring those experience back to share with other school teachers and staffs.

II. The Josiah Quincy Elementary School

The Josiah Quincy School locates in Boston. It is consistently ranked as the top public schools in Massachusetts. The school is also a landmark in Chinatown in the very heart of the city. The students range is from K to 5th grade.



▲ Figure 1. The Campus

With the principal's introduction, The Josiah Quincy School (JQS) offers an equal primary education to students without fluent English skills. The reason is that the location of this school is full of Chinese Americans or Chinese immigrants. After enrolling in the school, all the parents have to complete a language survey, which determines the child's home language, and the child would take an assessment to determine their ELD (English Language Development) level. A student with an assigned ELD level, and whose home language is not English, is an ELL (English Language Learner) student. Now, there are lots of ELL in JQS. Moreover, under the education policies, ELL students are qualified to receive the ESL (English as a Second Language) program. The instruction provides services to all ELL students at JQS.

The ESL curriculum at JQS focuses on developing students' ability, and which enables students to use English in both social and academic setting. In order to reinforce students' speaking, reading, writing, and listening, JQS provides intensive instruction in two ways: one is the pull out program and the other one is co-teaching.

In the pull out program, the students are pulled out from their main classes to receive the services, while the co-teaching is the collaboration with their classroom teachers. What the JQS expects is that ELL students will be able to pick up their English proficiency level and finally return to the regular class.

In today's class observation, I was lucky that I had a chance to observe the first grade SEI (Sheltered English Instruction classroom) class. When I stepped in Ms. Li's class, I noticed that there were 20 students. Beside Ms. Li, there was another Cantonese teaching assistant. This 1st grade class shared the teaching space with other classes. There were no actual walls between each class, so children need to concentrate on Ms. Li's instruction carefully. Even though the teaching space was not so big, there was still a reading corner next to students' seats.



▲ Figure 2. The Classroom



▲ Figure 3. The Reading Corner

Beside the reading corner, I noticed the classroom decoration was not only close to students' life experience but also related to students' reward system. Once the teacher gave a student some praise, he/ she could have the permission to move the name clip to an upper board.

To begin with the class, Ms. Li guided students to go through the morning message. Then she asked one student to sit in the front, and encouraged students to ask some questions about self-introduction. At first, students were too shy to ask. However, after Ms. Li started asking the first question, students were willing to ask other questions. During the lesson, I could feel the learning atmosphere was supportive and collaborative. Ms. Li continuously gave students positive reward such

as “I like the way how ___ is sitting there” or “I like the way how ___ is taking out the book.” Those compliments really helped the young learners to engage in the lesson more.



▲ Figure 4. The Reward System



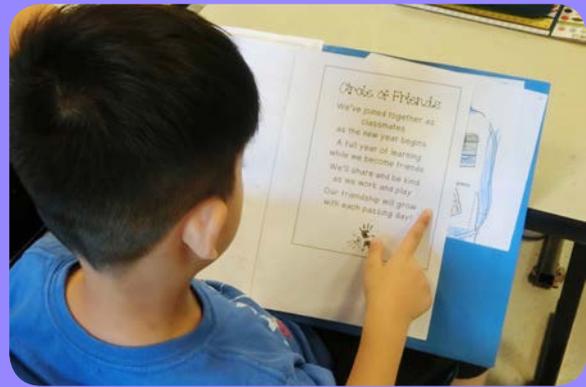
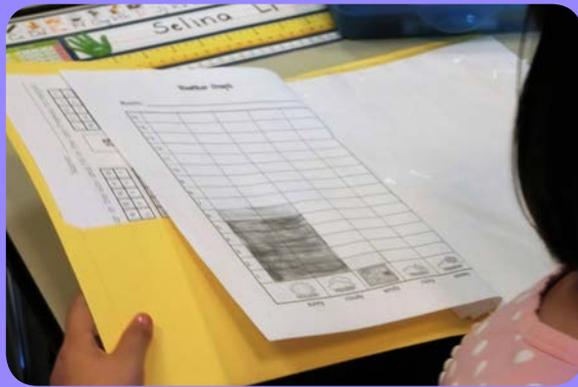
▲ Figure 5. The Lesson

Moreover, since this was the SEI (Sheltered English Instruction classroom) class, I supposed sometimes Ms. Li might use Chinese and Cantonese in her lesson. However, the Chinese guidance only happened in several students and it was not too long. Ms. Li did not lecture and give instructions to the whole class in Chinese, only the assistant helped a few students with short Cantonese. For those ELL students, I believe school is the only place where they can fully practice their English. Without the translation, students immerse in whole English environment. As the principal said, the environment helps them to fit in the general stream as soon as possible.

Last but not least, in Ms. Li's lesson, I am glad that I learned their teaching philosophy and the skills for classroom management. For instance, the positive reward and compliment ease students' learning anxiety. Moreover, the color-coding materials not only are good for students to get used to the daily routine, but also help us to manage students' work much easier.



▲ Figure 6. The Guidance from the Teaching Assistant



▲ Figure 7. The Color-coding Reading Folders

III. Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

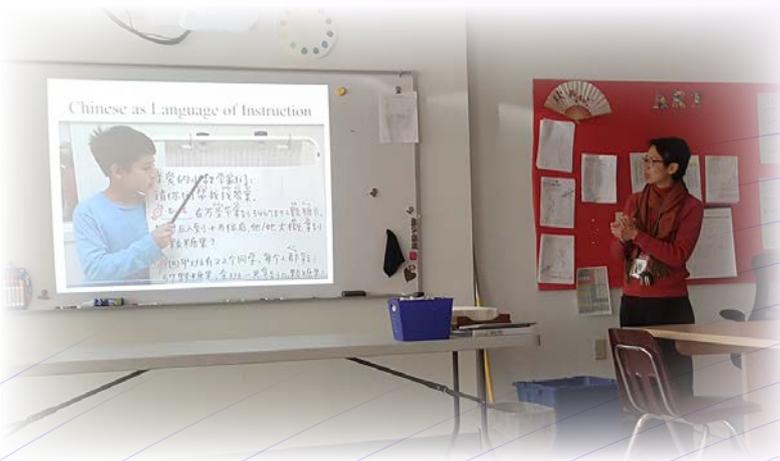
The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) provides K- 12th grade students structured English and Mandarin Chinese curriculum. Their goals are to help students reach high language proficiency and the understanding of multiple cultures.



▲ Figure 8. The campus of PVCICS

In PVCICS, the bilingual program uses "one-way" immersion model, meaning most students enter this school without any Chinese language skills. Students acquire Chinese language naturally by using Chinese as the language of instruction during part of the day. PVCICS splits the school schedule into halves, half of the day is the regular English instruction and the other half is Chinese immersion program.

In immersion programs, the teachers do not use English. Although students could talk to the teacher and classmates in English until they gain sufficient proficiency in Chinese. In K-5th grades, some core subjects are taught in English and some in Chinese. The situation of maintaining a second language is much alike in Taiwan. However, the public schools do not have enough time and resource to do immersion program. We, as the teachers can apply beneficial strategies in our daily lesson. In PVCICS' immersion lesson, teachers use a variety of techniques to make students comprehend the target language, such as visual cues, facial gestures, and body language.



▲ Figure 9. The School Introduction

| Grades | % of day in Chinese | Subjects taught in Chinese | % of day in English | Subjects taught in English |
|--------|---------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| K-1 | 75% | Math, Science, Social Studies, Chinese Language and Culture, Art | 25% | English, Music, PE |
| 2-5 | 50% | Math, Science, Chinese Language and Culture, Art | 50% | English, Social Studies, Music, PE |
| 6-12 | 25% | Chinese Language and Culture | 75% | English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music, Art, PE |

▲ Figure 10. Instructional Time by Grade

On October 13th, we observed the 5th grade CLA (Chinese Language Art) class. In this lesson, we not only observed the immersion class, but also taught a mini culture lesson to the students. The supervisor, Marilyn asked us to pay attention to students' Chinese speaking proficiency, and we were requested not to use any English in the class. There were 20 students and 2 Chinese teachers in the classroom, and the classroom was divided into two parts. One was the reading corner with a big mat and a whiteboard. The teacher greeted with the students and explained the morning message at the reading corner. The other one was the seating area, and the arrangement is collaborative, meaning there were 3-4 seats put face to face per group. I thought the seating was good for discussion among students.

In the beginning, Ms. Wang asked students to sit in a circle on the mat. The students started to take turns to greet with each other in Chinese, and they seemed to be familiar with this routine. After the greeting, Ms. Wang let students sit in lines, and asked them to pay attention to the morning message. In the morning message, there were some words with Chinese pinyin system and different colors. Students

followed the directions and started reading it. When they encountered unfamiliar words, Ms. Wang would stop and clarify them. Certainly, Ms. Wang did not use any English as the support, she tried to tap students' background knowledge and use simplified explanation to help students understand it. Likewise, students also did not use English to respond the teacher, and they really tried to speak out any Chinese they have learned.



▲ Figure 11. 5th Grade CLA Class

Later in the second half of the class, students really concentrated on our mini culture lesson. They were amazed by the traditional Taiwanese toys, and they were willing to try their best to answer every question in Chinese. It seemed that students had the agreement that they should speak Chinese all the time, even though they could not speak with accurate accent. They have enough listening comprehension and confidence to adapt themselves to the context.



▲ Figure 12. Mini Culture Lesson

Nevertheless, in comparison with Taiwanese students, they tend to be silent in the class. Because of the culture, they are afraid of making mistakes; therefore, teachers need to encourage and motivate students to speak up.

By looking at this Chinese immersion class, there are definitely some teaching strategies we can utilize in our EFL (English as Foreign Language) class. For example, the instruction should be presented in the target language all the time. Teacher could provide the assistance in first language for individual student just in case. Moreover, peers are also one of their choices to help to ask for help to pick up the target language. In order to inspire students with more oral production, we could make some posters of sentence starters and transition words to help students express their ideas.



▲ Figure 13. Chinese Transition Words

IV. Discussion and Reflection

In this section, the researcher is going to make the comparison among JQS, PVCICS and Xinshi Bilingual Experimental School where the researcher has worked in Taiwan. The discussion will be the class size, teaching time, teaching subjects, classroom setting, instruction language and teaching strategies. Moreover, this discussion is based on the researcher's observation and experience. After the discussion, the researcher will have a reflection to sum up this educational visit.

1. The Class Size

| | JQS SEI Class | PVCICS CLA Class | XSES Experimental Curriculum |
|-------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Students | 20 | 20 | 34 |
| Instructors | 1 teacher, 1 teaching assistant | 2 Chinese proficiency teachers | 1 foreign teacher, 1 local teacher |

I noticed that the smaller class meant that the teachers could easily target students who were struggling, and provided each student much more individual needs. From the researcher's experience, bigger class size made the teachers hard to handle students' behavior issues and maintain effective teaching.

2. The Language Program and the Teaching Time

| | JQS SEI Class | PVCICS CLA Class | XSES Experimental Curriculum |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|---|
| Language Program | ESL | 20 | 34 |
| Teaching Time | All day | Half of a day | G1-3: 1 period/ week G4-6: 2 periods/ week |

With the long-term exposure of the target language, students will aware that they should use the target language more. From both schools, I think what I can do is trying to create a whole English environment for students. The Chinese assistance is only for individual needs. Hopefully, students would benefit from my English lessons within the limited time.

3.The Subjects

| | JQS SEI Class | PVCICS CLA Class | XSES Experimental Curriculum |
|----------|---------------|---|------------------------------|
| Subjects | All subjects | Math, Social Studies, Science/Technology, Chinese Language Arts & Culture | Integrative Activities |

In JQS and PVCICS, students not only learn the target language but also obtain the academic achievement through the target language instruction. However, it is quite hard to implement it in Taiwan. It is quite challenging to teach Math, Science, or Social Studies in English, and we would not have such language teachers. In my school, except the regular English class, we only use an extra subject to create a curriculum framework corresponded to the standard. Moreover, to meet the concept of bilingual curriculum, we follow New Taipei City’s guidance to integrate the CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) methodology into our experimental curriculum.

4.Classroom Setting

| | JQS SEI Class | PVCICS CLA Class | XSES Experimental Curriculum |
|-------------------|---|--|--|
| Classroom Setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classrooms were separated by low furniture. Student seats, reading corner Collaborative seating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular classrooms Student seats, reading corner Collaborative seating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st-3rd Grade: homeroom classes 4th-6th Grade: 2 subject classrooms Student seats, reading corner Collaborative seating |

Speaking of the classroom setting, we should try flexible groupings. When we are planning a lesson, we would better design more group works for students who can learn collaboratively, instead of only listening to the teacher. As to the subject classrooms, we can decorate different learning stations where students can finish their tasks individually and quietly.

5. Instructional Language and Teaching Strategies

| | JQS SEI Class | PVICICS CLA Class | XSES Experimental Curriculum |
|--|---|--|--|
| Instructional Language and Teaching Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive rewards • Chinese support is used by the teachers personally. • Color-coding materials • Visual aids for learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese support is used by the teachers personally. • Color-coding words • Visual aids for learning • Simplified language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign teacher sometimes asks local teacher translate for students. • Simplified language • Visual aids and body language |

It is never easy to learn a foreign language, the guidance and the strategies are essential for students. Positive reinforcement definitely build up students' motivation and confidence toward language learning. Visual aids, body gestures, and simplified language improve students' understanding the context, and students would more willing to respond the teachers.

In summary, by examining the comparison, I can adapt their advantages and incorporate them into my curriculum. Especially from PVICICS' experience, I admire the teachers who put much effort on Chinese immersion program. Moreover, the cross-cultural communication is never easy for us. With the supervisor's sharing, they are also trying to collaborate Chinese and English teachers constantly. They set up a mutual time for both Chinese and English teachers to discuss curriculum and classroom management. It reminds me that the communication of a teacher community either perfects or dulls the curriculum. In my school, the collaboration is also close that we not only work in class but also design the curriculum together. I have to spare much time for subject meeting and school year teachers meeting. Especially, the contents of our English class and experimental bilingual curriculum are not connected. It is time-consuming to prepare your lesson and design the curriculum with the foreign teachers. However, to ensure students have better learning, we build up the



▲ Figure 14. With the Supervisor, Marilyn

structured strategies and the same classroom management skills with the foreign teachers to make both classes more cohesive. I hope that the foreign teachers will less rely on our translation to get a better classroom management. By seeing other schools' models, I will adapt them into my teacher community to seek for the best resolution of our teaching collaboration.

To sum up, this trip has brought me much unforgettable experience. First of all, by seeing different kinds of public schools from elementary schools to high schools, it's obvious that the administration group is so supportive that the teachers can really focus on teaching. Those teachers show their teaching profession on lesson designing, and show how they interpret the textbooks and the state curriculum frameworks successfully. Secondly, 3C devices for learning are far better than we have in Taiwan. I can see that students work independently with their pace, and work collaboratively in every group project. Surprisingly, students do not argue in the discussions, and they indeed treat those 3C devices as the learning tool. Instead of the knowledge on textbooks, students have more chances to access to the real world. Most important of all, students are confident enough to express themselves. They are responsible to themselves, and they fully pay attention in class. Above all, the qualities of American students are the keys that we should remind our students to keep up.

Last but not least, I am thankful that I had a chance to spend those days with the principals, the director, and the perfect teachers. The schedules we had were wonderful. We were so lucky that we could visit many schools. From every school to classroom, they certainly amazed me. In this tour, we not only shared what we saw in every school but also shared our working experience with each other. I truly believe even when we are back to Taiwan, those teachers are still the helpful partners in my English teaching career.



▲ Figure 15. Student's Active Learning



▲ Figure 16. Perfect members from New Taipei City

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