College Education and English Immersion Courses in China

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Abstract. Due to the growing status of internationalization, English immersion pedagogy has shown strong significance for the cultivation of students' language comprehension in Chinese universities. Though there has been much discussion on English immersion theoretically and practically, few discussions on the application of immersion teaching at the tertiary level in China. This paper specifically focused on a comparison study of the traditional English classroom and English Immersion classrooms. Drawing on questionnaires, Pre-post participant questionnaires are analyzed and compared quantitatively. Results show that students were generally more positive towards English immersion courses than traditional English teaching. Findings are discussed corresponding to classroom teaching practices in the two groups, which took 16 weeks to complete. Finally, teaching implications on how to enhance the quality of University English teaching, hoping to provide useful information for further reform and teaching practice.

Keywords: Immersion teaching · English education · Second language acquisition · applied linguistics

1 Introduction

With the development of globalization, interactions with the world are becoming more and more frequent. Since the advantages of bilingual education are well documented [1]. English talents are increasingly on demand in recent years. "College English Curriculum Requirements (Trial)" clearly claimed to promote students' English proficiency, especially in listening and speaking, so that they can better communicate with foreigners in social interaction, and at the same time strengthen their self-learning ability, enhance cultural literacy, in order to meet the needs of my country's social development and international exchanges. There has been much discussion on different forms of immersion in North America and Europe [2], especially at the kindergarten and primary level, but relatively it has been few studies on the features and effectiveness of English immersion in Chinese Universities, compared to the traditional English classroom. Though the strategies of language immersion are well-developed, they cannot be appropriately adopted in the Chinese context.

How effective are immersion teaching conducted in the college English classroom? In order to deeply understand the great impact of English immersion in college English

classrooms, the research conducted a questionnaire, the purpose of which is to investigate University students' understanding of English immersion learning and their studying progress in Fujian context. A total of 48 questionnaires were distributed to the participants. This experiment lasted for 16 weeks, aiming to assess the overall efficacy and the concept of English immersion teaching compared to conventional teaching in the college level. In this paper, we first review the experiment result, and discuss the issues of immersion classrooms in the college level on such basis. Finally, some practical strategies are given for recontextualizing English immersion.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Analysis of the Current Issues of English Immersion Education in Chinese Universities

2.1.1 Lack of Appropriate Medium of Instruction in English

Based on the current situation of the college English classroom, it can be observed that many college English teachers still lack a legal basis for understanding and utilizing immersion pedagogies [3]. Most teachings are still exam-oriented and less focused on creating an ease language environment. In addition, another fact is that the difference between Chinese and English is much larger than the imparity between French and English, which makes it doubtful to implement imported immersion education models such as the Canadian French immersion model with any modification [4].

2.1.2 Lack of Applicable Teaching Resources in Different Areas

From a macro perspective, the success of immersion education should be given the credit to the existing social environment and language policies. However, students are mainly immersed in their first language, and there is not enough language practice or an English immersive environment. Due to the serious imbalance of teacher-student ratio in college English classrooms, the ratio of teachers and students is usually 80:1, which leads to inadequate education resources. Though students are taught second language culture and knowledge, while facing the real situation, they still cannot integrate with what they have learned and what they face in real life [5].

2.1.3 Lack of Qualified Bilingual Teachers

Qualified teachers for a successful implementation of immersion education are essential, especially at the college level. Although qualified English teachers continue to grow, most teachers still conduct cramming methods to deliver the lessons. Due to their pragmatics and consistent mindset, they communicate with students in their L1 daily. This greatly reduces the opportunities for students to be involved in the authentic language environment thereby weakening the interest and motivation of students in learning English [6]. To carry out the professionalism of local teachers, teacher-training workshops are not regularly conducted, for giving teachers basic teaching ideas or strategies [7]. In addition, although foreign teachers are recruited to be in the teaching teams, their educational background and classroom management are not strictly regulated, resulting in

a lack of teaching resources. Plus English supplements are so limited by time and space, and foreign teachers have not adapted themselves to the domestic context, which also exerts a great influence on the development of English immersion [8].

2.1.4 Students' Lack of Interest in Immersion Learning

Based on the progress of college students' English learning, except for English-major students, other students only regard English courses as a fast track to obtain high credits in the national CET-4 and CET-6 exams [9]. 'integrated English with other subjects content is the core feature of language immersion, However, based on local characteristics, usually the school subjects are taught in students' first language, and there is limited effectiveness of the integrated English model.

3 Research Methodology

To understand deeply whether English immersion has brought about a significant difference in students' language performance [10], we conducted an independent samples t-test, the purpose of which is to investigate the recognition of the "immersion English teaching method" and its effectiveness for college students in Fujian context. In order to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, 48 questionnaires were distributed in the experimental class. This experiment lasted for 16 weeks, aiming to find out the effectiveness of immersion teaching in college English courses. With the help of SPSS20.0, the research adopts the data analysis methods of independent sample t-test and paired sample t-test to analyze and discuss the data obtained from the questionnaires before and after the experiment, and test the result before and after the experiment. The questionnaire is in the form of a Likert scale. Immersion teaching was carried out during the whole process, a total of 16 core questions are designed from the five dimensions: (1) students' class participation, (2) students' participation engagement, (3) participation method, (4) learning interest and (5) students' personality. The dimension of students' classroom participation includes 3 core questions as Q1, Q2, and Q3; the dimension of student participation engagement includes 5 questions as Q4–Q8; the dimension of student participation includes 2 questions as Q9–Q10; the dimension of learning interest includes Q11–Q12 and other 2 questions; students' personalities include Q13–Q14 and other 2 questions. The answers to the question answer are fixed according to different degrees of willingness, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". After the data collection was completed, the above five options were assigned as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively for statistical analysis in SPSS20.0. With the help of SPSS20.0 software, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test the internal reliability of the questionnaire.

4 Results and Discussion

The reliability test results are shown in Table 1.

We mainly focus on the analysis of the impact of the immersion teaching method on college students' interest, participation, effect, method, and personality.

Table 1. Questionnaire reliability test

NUMBER OF ITEMS	SAMPLE SIZE	*Cronbach α* COEFFICIENTS
16	94	0.799

Table 2. Independent sample t-test of the meaning of the two groups.

Group			mean	N	standard deviation	standard error of the mean
g	Group1	Pre-test	2.8750	48	1.11008	.16023
		Post-test	3.3880	48	.74799	.10796
	Group 2	Pre-test	2.7500	48	.87080	.12569
		Post-test	3.3333	48	.67077	.09682
	Group 3	Pre-test	2.9792	48	1.16673	.16840
		Post-test	2.4271	48	.98386	.14201
	Group 4	Pre-test	2.7917	48	1.03571	.14949
		Post-test	3.4271	48	.80550	.11626
	Group 5	Pre-test	2.7396	48	.92965	.13418
		Post-test	3.1042	48	.71242	.10283

To better understand the difference in the five respects of class participation, participation engagement, participation method, learning interest, and personality of the experimental class during the experiment, SPSS20 as shown in Table 2.

It shows that the mean of the 48 samples in the experimental class is lower than the mean of the pre-test (2.8750) in the post-test (3.3889) (Table 3).

The data show that the 5 groups of data in this study have certain differences ($p < 0.05$). The specific analysis is as follows:

There is a 0.05 level of significance between the degree of participation and the degree of participation ($t = -2.653$, $p = 0.011$). By comparing the differences between the data, the average of the pre-test participation degree (2.88) is significantly less than the corresponding average of the post-test. Value (3.39).

There is a 0.01 level of significance between the participation effect and the participation effect ($t = -4.224$, $p = 0.000$). By comparing the differences between the data, the average of the pre-test participation effect (2.75) is significantly less than the corresponding average of the post-test, value (3.33).

There is a 0.05 level of significance between the participation method and the participation method ($t = 2.564$, $p = 0.014$). By comparing the differences between the data, the average value of the pre-test participation method (2.98) is significantly higher than the corresponding average value of the post-test (2.43).

Table 3. Paired sample test before and after the experiment

Group	mean	standard deviation	standard error of the mean	95%confidence interval for difference		t		Sig. (Bilateral)
				lower limit	upper limit			
1 Pre-test participant	.52.389	13.4210	0.19371	−.90359	−.12418	−2.653	47	.011
Post-test participation								
2 Pre-test participation	.58.333	19.680	0.13810	−.86116	−.30551	−4.224	47	.000
Post-test participation								
3 Pre-test participation·	.55.208	14.9196	0.21536	−.11886	−0.98530	2.564	47	.014
Post-test participation								
4 Pre-test participation·	.63.542	13.3584	0.19281	−1.02330	−.24753	−3.296	47	.002
Post-test participation								
5 Pre-test participation·	.36.458	12.3012	0.17755	−.72177	−.00739	−2.053	47	.046
Post-test participation								

There is a 0.01 level of significant difference in students' learning interest $(t = -3.296, p = 0.002)$. Through data comparison, the average value of learning interest in the pre-test (2.79) is significantly less than the corresponding average in the post-test, Value (3.43).

There is a significant level of 0.05 between the personality situation and the personality situation $(t = -2.053, p = 0.046)$. Through the comparison of the data, the average of the pre-test personality situation (2.74) is significantly less than the corresponding average of the post-test, value (3.10).

To sum up, the comparison of the data before and after the test shows that among the 5 groups of data, there are significant differences in the data, indicating that the students learning progress has improved significantly before and after the experiment. Immersion teaching can outperform traditional teaching models.

Therefore, it can be found that compared with other teaching methods, immersion in foreign language teaching has its unique teaching characteristics. Directly targeting

language as a teaching language is a core emphasis in learning a foreign language. A comprehensive teaching model that combines language with content-based and tasked-based pedagogies driven. First of all, the subject content enriches the knowledge of language teaching and promotes the professionalism of language teaching, letting students be in a less stressful second language environment. Secondly, various subject courses provide a good platform for numerous topic discussions, improving students' communication skills. Finally, immersion teaching cultivates learners' cognitive ability and a better understanding of the target language culture and strengthens their whole-person development.

5 Conclusion

Drawing on the questionnaires, documentary data, and test scores, this paper has reported on the effectiveness of the English immersion program in higher education. The present study is one example of the college English teaching projects in China. However, at present, the immersion teaching method in many colleges and universities in China is not mature enough, and there are problems such as inappropriate teaching pedagogies, lack of teaching resources, inadequate teaching teams, and lack of students' learning interest. This also requires universities and teachers to explore this aspect further. By adapting the concept of teacher education, creating an excellent language environment, building a team of dual-skilled teachers, and strengthening collaboration between foreign teachers and local teachers, much deeper integration of the foreign language teaching and subject contents in tertiary classrooms, and effectively improves the effectiveness of college English courses. we believe re-conceptualizing this emerging model would maximize the effectiveness of the local teaching model, better prepare students for academic success as well as cultivate high-quality bilingual talents for the country.

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