

## Discussion on the Factors Influencing the Effect of Bilingual Teaching in Chinese Universities and Countermeasures

SUN Jing<sup>[a], \*</sup>; XU Bing<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup> Business Management School, Shenyang University, Shenyang 110041, China.

<sup>[b]</sup> Music Educational School, Shenyang University, Shenyang 110041, China.

\* Corresponding author.

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### Abstract

Bilingual education is conducive to promoting the teaching reform, cultivating international talents, but the effective of bilingual teaching will be restricted by the level of foreign language, teaching model, teachers' shortages, foreign information and orientation, and some other factors. Bilingual teaching in China's colleges and universities should implement the techniques of step by step, and at the same time enhance the training, guidance and encouragement of teachers, correctly handle the relationship between professional teaching and foreign language teaching, use the original teaching material and carry out interactive learning; thus will there be better teaching efficiency.

**Key words:** Bilingual education; Teaching models; International; Teaching reform

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Bilingual education uses two languages in the process of teaching, and through two languages as a medium of teaching, it enhances students' language proficiency and expertise in the process of teaching. After China joins the WTO, the process of economic globalization gradually speeded up; the development of various trades and industries in China maintained close links with other countries around the world; international commercial

activities became important economic activities in China. In order to adapt to the development of globalization and international business practices, as a new teaching mode, bilingual teaching gradually became the focus of the education sector and the community.

### 1. SIGNIFICANCE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR CULTIVATING INTERNATIONALIZED TALENTS AND THE TEACHING REFORM

Bilingual education is the perfect combination of professional teaching and foreign language teaching, which teaches students the professional foreign languages, knowledge and culture and conveys advanced foreign research status to the students. As bilingual teaching combines two kinds of teaching aims and contents, it will have a huge advantage for speeding up the reform of teaching and cultivating international talents.

#### 1.1 Advantages of Bilingual Teaching to Cultivate Versatile Talents

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the age of rapid development of science and technology, especially the rapid development of information technology, the spatial distance in the world has been greatly reduced. Behavior of individuals, corporations and countries is likely to involve a variety of knowledge, so there is a buoyant social demand for talents. University is a training base for talents. Compound-type talents proficient in foreign languages and computer skills have a solid professional foundation as well as pioneering and innovative spirit. In Bilingual teaching, professional teaching and foreign language teaching are combined, and in the classroom, students not only master the foreign language knowledge, but also the professional knowledge. More important is that students are familiar with foreign ideas, culture, and society. In such teaching, students will

acquire new perspectives, construction of new knowledge system, which is conducive to the development of their creative spirit and the cultivation of talents.

### **1.2 Advantages to Creating an Interactive English Learning Environment and to Improving Students' English Standards**

Chinese students learn English from primary school to university, for about ten years, but most have little actual effect in the end. A very important reason is the lack of English interactive environment. Traditional English teaching is often teacher-centered. Teachers focus on teaching English knowledge and the English test scores, and they put less emphasis on training the students' language proficiency and communicative skills. Due to the lack of English-speaking environment, students will not use English very often. English is difficult to blurt out for them, and their level of spoken English is low. Chinese students' written English skills are better, but their practical application is poor. Bilingual teaching provides an English-speaking and English-practicing environment for students. In this interactive environment, students can improve their English proficiency, improve their English level. Bilingual teaching is a new phenomenon in the current English teaching reform.

### **1.3 Favourite Link with International Advanced Theory and Practice**

Bilingual teaching is not simply language teaching. Language is the carrier of knowledge, and in the process of bilingual teaching, foreign languages have changed from a tool to thought and knowledge. Through the language media, students can understand the foreign original books, papers and research reports and master foreign advanced practice and theory. This advantage is more obvious in the courses of management, finance and advertising psychology which originate from foreign countries. Bilingual teaching improves practice teaching in China and it has become a media for international cultural research and exchange.

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## **2. ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECT OF BILINGUAL TEACHING IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES**

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As bilingual teaching in China started late, its development time is shorter. Teachers and students should put bilingual teaching before the mother-tongue teaching, which still has many problems and limitations.

### **2.1 Effect of Bilingual Teaching is Restricted by Students' Foreign Language Level**

Students are the main body and receiver of bilingual teaching, and students' acceptance directly impact the effect of bilingual teaching. So you can say that students'

foreign language proficiency is an important factor for bilingual teaching. Although foreign language teaching in China is quite important, foreign language teaching has been focused on the examination, especially the reading and writing abilities; thereby ignoring the listening and speaking skills. Students' foreign language proficiency is uneven because of the different levels of foreign language teaching in various regions. In Chinese universities, the English standards of students varied, which makes bilingual curriculum design extremely difficult. Students' English ability in listening, speaking, reading and writing is difficult to uniform. Professional course teaching usually take the professional class as units, but the teachers cannot divide the students' English language proficiency to take sub-class teaching. This makes the teachers teaching the same content to students with different English language skills. Differently designed courses are very difficult to accept. Second, bilingual teaching is likely to fight against lower level of foreign language students and to increase the difficulty of instruction. Students' low listening and speaking abilities may produce language obstacles for bilingual teaching, coupled with the problem that bilingual teaching are generally using original textbooks with large quantity of rich and novel reading materials. They can provide the latest professional knowledge, but for students with low level of foreign language, the quantity of information precisely became obstacles for their reading and understanding. They might even get tired of learning, which has increased the bilingual teaching difficulty.

### **2.2 Bilingual Teaching Quality is Restricted by Shortage of Teachers**

In the promotion of bilingual teaching, the quantity and quality of teachers directly affect the implementation of bilingual teaching. Bilingual teaching requires bilingual teachers not only to have a deep professional knowledge, but also a good foreign language skills as well as solid teaching skills. Bilingual teaching teachers' ability and level are the influencing factors to the quality of bilingual teaching. There is a lack of foreign language teachers with professional knowledge and specialized teachers with foreign language oral expression skills. Bilingual education teachers generally have master degrees or doctorate degrees, so their professional foundation is solid. But the vast majority of these bilingual teachers do not have more than one year of study or work experience abroad, so their English ability is not comprehensive. Usually Their vocabulary and reading ability are strongly, but their listening and speaking skills are relatively weak, and they have a limited understanding of the western culture which is only from the media or reading. Therefore, teachers' competence is a key factor to bilingual teaching quality.

At present, bilingual teachers in Chinese universities can be divided into five categories: professional teachers with overseas background; professional teachers with

a background of foreign language major; professional teachers having been trained on bilingual teaching; foreign teachers; bilingual teachers in web-based courses. Due to the high standards for bilingual teachers, shortage of such teachers can be expected. In 2006, Suzhou University held a seminar on bilingual teaching in colleges and universities, more than 150 teachers and scholars from 70 colleges and universities, and experts of the Education Ministry talked about the promotion of bilingual teaching in colleges and universities in China. The experts agreed that the shortage of teachers is the biggest bottleneck of promoting bilingual teaching in colleges and universities.

### **2.3 Bilingual Teaching is Constrained by Teaching Modes**

Building a complete bilingual teaching curriculum framework to guide bilingual teaching towards the specified, unified and clarified system development--this is an important factor to the success of bilingual teaching. In China, some universities have some courses with bilingual instruction, that is, "bilingual education". The knowledge levels of teachers and students in a few key universities are higher. "Bilingual education" started early, and some specialized courses have numerous foreign-language materials, and they have successfully trained a number of bilingual talents, who have very good communication with foreigners.

But these early bilingual education are limited to some special areas, such as foreign trade, international business, international management, which aim at adapting to economic globalization and development of international education's comprehensive coverage. Though the subject of "bilingual" was carried out in recent years, it is still in its infancy, and the exploratory period. In 2001, the Ministry of Education began promoting bilingual teaching in colleges and universities in China, and encouraged them to introduce foreign materials, bilingual education has become an important form of the teaching reform in colleges and universities. But due to the late appearance and insufficient experience, bilingual teaching in China's universities has not formed a system or a teaching form. Their textbooks and assessment ways are different, and there are different degrees of problems concerning courses content design, bilingual teachers training, and bilingual teaching evaluation.

### **2.4 Bilingual Teaching Contents are Restricted by English Materials**

Bilingual materials are the core resources, important foundation as well as important factors in restricting the bilingual teaching in colleges and universities. Among a wide range of university courses, there is only one teacher to teach many courses in a school. Writing bilingual teaching materials is the work of a team. In addition to using the professional teachers, we also need to invite English teachers to revise the language. Therefore, the

ability to write textbooks is very limited. Most teachers are willing to photocopy materials, which are relatively cheap, and students are willing to pay the appropriate fees. Photocopied materials are lagging behind the latest versions for about four or five years. So timeliness for many courses weakened the advantages of directly reading original materials to access to new knowledge. However, teachers can combine the scientific research ability in the professional fields, and use the corresponding English-language literature as a supplement.

It's a hindrance that students with poor English are reading English textbooks. Whether supplemented by Chinese materials as references, it has been a controversy for bilingual teaching. Some believe that the charm of bilingual teaching lies in reading the authentic professional knowledge. If the auxiliary materials are in Chinese, no doubt it is to enable students to continue to learn in Chinese, without growth in the bilingual teaching. And the other party believes that students have difficulties in language comprehension and are not able to master professional knowledge. In order to improve the learning efficiency, the teachers should comply with the rules of their aptitude in the process of bilingual teaching, give different guidance for students with different abilities, encourage them to go further on the basis of their abilities and promote the development and growth of students.

### **2.5 Development of Bilingual Teaching is Hindered by Teaching Objectives**

Bilingual teaching covers different teaching objectives, and mastering and application of foreign languages and professional knowledge is the most important goal of bilingual teaching. However, in teaching practice, bilingual teaching became language teaching, teachers spent lots of time explaining vocabulary and syntax, and ignored teaching professional knowledge and explaining professional theory; on the other hand, sometimes, bilingual teaching became professional courses: teachers using lots of Chinese to teach foreign theory, and ignored raising students' foreign language application ability.

Compared with bilingual education in foreign countries, Chinese universities' starting point is the absorption of advanced knowledge of science and culture and training bilingual personnel to meet the needs of the society, but the use of two languages to master the advanced science and technology and cultural knowledge is one of the important foundations of knowing and understanding differences of the social culture, language and habits of thinking. Therefore, ignoring the non-local culture understanding ability training is an important reason of leading to bilingual teaching inefficiency, because all the civilization's development cannot be separated from the cultural and social background. Thus, fostering multicultural and understanding to non-native culture is conducive to grasping languages and professional knowledge of disciplines and increasing the

efficiency of bilingual teaching.

### **3 . A N A L Y S I S O F T H E C O U N T E R M E A S U R E S F O R I M P R O V I N G T H E E F F E C T O F B I L I N G U A L T E A C H I N G**

#### **3.1 Step by Step Implementation of Bilingual Teaching**

Foreign language learning and its application in the professional knowledge is a gradual process. One cannot reach the desired level through one or two courses of bilingual teaching. In the course schedule of bilingual teaching, we should be aware of its continuity, make it link the entire studying stage. The number of bilingual courses should also be gradually increased with the improvement of students' language proficiency. Adherence and application is the key to learning a foreign language, thus creating a good application environment. Perseverance is the key to improving English level. Students use English in class from never adapted, gradually adapted, to forming a habit of learning English in the end. Forming such a habit during the subsequent development of students has a very good role in reading professional literature, listening to lectures and oral communication. Specifically, we should consider different students' differences in foreign language levels, subject features, and the teaching contents of with different difficulties of culture implications. According to the students' voluntary and English degree, by science of investigation questionnaire, we can analyze the students' foreign language levels and the teaching needs, so as to develop reasonable teaching programs. For example, the immersion bilingual education model maintains the features of bilingual teaching model and the transition bilingual teaching model.

#### **3.2 Strengthening the Training, Guidance and Motivation of Teachers**

One of the important problems of bilingual teaching is teachers' problem, which is the key to teaching quality. Therefore, we should develop the teacher training plan for bilingual teaching, choose teachers who have greater development potential. We can send them abroad to implement short-term language training or employ foreign teachers to train them. In this way, we may develop a group of teachers who have strong professional foundation, and can use fluent foreign language in teaching in classroom. Second, focusing on the concept of change and updating the teaching method can make teachers actively change themselves during the process of teaching, from a teacher who simply teaches to a director, from one-way information output to bi-direction information communication, in order to provide an easy and harmonious of teaching atmosphere, create equal communication and discussion between teachers

and students, encourage students to ask questions and elaborate their views. In this way, it not only can enhance and deepen the students' recognition and understanding of the basis curriculum knowledge, while exercising the students' English skills, it has also created good conditions for the purpose of implementing bilingual teaching. Third, the bilingual education teachers need to do more hard work, in order to stimulate the enthusiasm of the teachers and we should also establish appropriate incentives system.

#### **3.3 Correctly Handling the Relationship between Professional Teaching and Bilingual Teaching**

Bilingual education is not to achieve the goals of language education through language courses, but to achieve the goal of helping learners to master two languages through other subjects in school education. The target of bilingual teaching is to train professional knowledge and bilingual ability of advanced expertise across industries, rather than a simple translation. Therefore, properly handling the relationship between English teaching and professional teaching in the bilingual teaching course is very important. Teachers must clearly know that bilingual teaching purpose is fully improving foreign language and professional knowledge learning, even the understanding of world synchronization of modern science knowledge. And for providing students with opportunities of academic communication and learning professional foreign language vocabulary through the teaching process, the teachers need to focus on English and understand that using Chinese to teach professional knowledge is totally wrong. Teachers should understand that the relationship between the two is interdependent. As to the English teaching methods, the bilingual teaching courses is breakthrough through teaching other professional courses.

#### **3.4 Using the Original English Textbook and Improving Interactive Learning**

Chinese teachers writing English textbooks have difficulties in general. It is best to use foreign-language teaching materials when developing bilingual teaching. Using original English textbooks would not only help China's colleges and universities to update the professional knowledge, broaden professional horizons, but also help students understand the latest professional knowledge and improve their comprehensive quality of English, enhance international cooperation and competitiveness. At the same time, bilingual teaching contains new teaching thought in the original materials which may inspire the teachers' teaching ideas, which might be a great harvest for both teachers and students. But when using the original materials, if the traditional teaching method for teaching is used, it will be difficult to keep up with the progress of teaching for students, often inefficient as the vocabulary is enlarged. It requires students to have a certain autonomy of interactive learning

methods in order to get better and better learning results. This means students should learn outside the classroom. Through interactive discussions between teachers and students in the classroom, teachers examine the learning effect and solve the key problems out of the system the professional frontier theory knowledge. Specifically, before class, according to the teaching hours in class, the teacher combines the materials and the development of several topics and requires students to understand and master these thematic content in the Chinese textbooks, reference books or the Internet, and to write a report after class. In the classroom, the teacher uses the multimedia courseware and original materials for English teaching. In order to give students a good understanding, key points and difficulties can be explained in Chinese. Also, in order to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of the students, as they state their views in English, teachers may ask them to analyze the similarities and differences in both the Chinese and foreign language contents. Of course, vivid cases in English are essential as well.

The current bilingual teaching is still in the exploration phase, and there are still many problems for the design of bilingual teaching. The development of bilingual teaching should be in line with the spirit of seeking truth. All in all, bilingual education is the inevitable trend of the teaching reform as well as a new important channel for cultivating internationalized talents.

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