

## **English Language Policy for Elementary Schools in Taiwan: What Parents Think**

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### **Abstract**

In the early 2000s, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan moved the beginning of English education from junior high school to elementary school. Since then, little research has been completed on parents and their opinions of this policy. The purpose of this study was to discover how parents felt about the current elementary school English language policy. Forty-one parents, with at least one child in elementary school, filled out a Chinese questionnaire. After the analysis was completed, the results were compared to a similar study completed in 2003 looking at the opinions of parents, teachers and policy makers toward the policy. The major change in the past decade involved a greater desire for foreign teachers to be in the classrooms. Additionally, there was an increase in the belief that earlier is better in regards to English education. Parents also wanted more resources allocated to the schools in order to hire teachers and to purchase other learning materials. While the results showed only a little change in the opinions of parents in the last decade, the changes that were found were problematic and show the need to do more, so that all children in Taiwan have equality when it comes to English learning.

**Keywords:** Elementary School English, English in Taiwan, Parents

### **Introduction**

It is well established, and it has become a cliché to say, that English has become either “*the* global language” (Kim, 2009, p. 282, emphasis in original) or at the very least one of the global languages (Crystal, 2003) today. English is the language of the sea and of the air, along with being the main language of communication, media and education (Crystal, 2003). Even in Taiwan, the government has set a goal of improving “[t]he English proficiency of primary and

secondary school students” (Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan) (MOE), 2005a, p. 5). Part of this comes from the fact that in Taiwan, the ability to speak English can show status, gives one a global view and is a “tool for social mobility” (Chen, 2010, p. 97).

English in Taiwan belongs to the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) area and falls into the expanding circles of English (Kachru, 1985 as cited in 1992). English in Taiwan does not follow similar patterns to its neighbors in regards to English. Unlike Hong Kong, Singapore, or the Philippines, Taiwan was not a colony of an English-speaking country (Manthorpe, 2005; Pennycook, 1998). It also does not share the similarities of South Korea, where the USA has had a major presence since the end of the Second World War (Kim, 2011). English in Taiwan has instead grown from the influence and the power of the USA (Chomsky, 2004; Huang, 2005; Tsao, 2001). Chomsky (2004) stated that the main Asian strategy of the American president Ronald Reagan was to make sure “that [East Asia] would remain essentially in the American orbit” (p. 402).

This is not to say that English teaching is new to Taiwan. English has been a school subject since 1949, with students taking courses in English starting in secondary school (Su, 2006). In 1954, English became one of the core testing subjects for the Joint College Entrance Exam (Wu, 2009). Not much had changed in regards to the teaching of English until the late 1990s/early 2000s. It was then that Taiwan, at the same time going through democratic changes, completely changed the policy of English education, allowing English to start in elementary school (MOE, 2005b).

Shen (2003) at the beginning of the change, looked at the opinions of four groups of stakeholders (English teachers, Chinese teachers, parents, administrators/government officials) in regards to the new policy. Since then, there have been many studies looking at the teaching of English (see Chen & Tsai, 2012). Most of the studies have looked at the issue in general, with only a few studies looking at parents or administrators. This is odd as it is ultimately the parents and the government officials that will drive policy. As much as we would like to think that empirical studies will influence the discussion, it is public opinion that does. This can be seen in the numerous private English cram schools known as *buhсібans* that students attend at night, in addition to the numerous English-Chinese bilingual kindergartens (P.-Y. Lee, 2009; Liao, 2000; Scott & Chen,

2004; Scott & Tiun, 2007).

## **Purpose and Significance of Study**

The purpose of this study was to add to the discussion on the elementary school English policy by focusing on the general opinions of parents. It is significant in two ways: (a) it is investigating a group of people missing in studies; and (b) it is looking at the changes of the opinions over the past decade. Any major changes would show places that must be addressed by policy makers and other researchers.

## **Literature Review**

### **Importance of English in Taiwan**

Crystal (2003) developed six major points on why English became a global language. For the purpose of this paper, only two (media and education) will be discussed as they relate to the importance of English in Taiwan.

Starting with media, Crystal (2003) wrote 14 pages on the power of media in the spread of English around the world. The points all fit well in Taiwan. Taiwan has two daily print English newspapers (*Taipei Times*; *The China Post*) and English is also used in advertisements (Chen, 2006). CNN is the only station that broadcasts completely in English on television, but there are at least four movie stations and three addition channels that broadcast largely in English. The government of Taiwan actually pushed for an increase in the amount of English on TV. Its goal by 2007 was to have 730 hours of English programs a week, by 2005 it had reached 640 hours (see performance index link in MOE, 2005a).

In regards to movies, English movies are very popular in Taiwan. In 2011, Eight of the top ten grossing films were English language films. The other two moves, *那些年,我們一起追的女孩* (*You are the Apple of my Eye*) and *賽德克·巴萊* (*Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale*), were the only non-English language movies on the list. In 2010, only one non-English movie (*艋舺* (*Monga*)) made the top ten list (Box Office Mojo, 2011, 2012).

In regards to education, going overseas to study in an English

speaking country is very popular with students in Taiwan. During the 2010-2011 academic school year, there were 24,818 Taiwanese students studying in the USA, placing Taiwan number five for the most number of students studying in America, higher than Saudi Arabia and Japan. Since the 1996-1997 academic year, Taiwan has averaged over 28,000 students in the USA per year (Institute of International Education (IIE), 2011; see also MOE, 2005a).

Even if a student doesn't leave Taiwan, he or she will still need to have good English skills for university. Many universities require the passing of a national (Taiwan) English test before the students are able to receive their diploma. One school cited in a newspaper article on the subject, Tamkang University, has gone further telling its students that they must have a good score on either the TOEIC or IELTS before they can graduate. This requirement is for all students, not just the ones in the English Department (News Staff, 2012a).

### **The Attitudes Toward English in Taiwan**

Connected to the ideas of the global dominance of English are the attitudes toward English in Taiwan. Chang (2008), Chen (2010), Huang (2005), and Hsueh (2009) all found positive views dealing with English in Taiwan. Chang (2008) found almost 95% of the participants saw English as important or very important (p. 427). Chen (2010) in a major study found that people in Taiwan, "perceive English to have greater instrumental value than Mandarin" (p. 97). Huang (2005), in a study of university students in Taiwan, found the ideas of economy and communication (internationalization) as important reasons for learning English. Hsueh (2009) found that university students had the highest positive attitudes with junior high school students having the lowest attitudes. However, Huang (2005) found that similar to Chang (2008) and Chen (2010), the use of English outside of the classroom was very low.

### **English Language Policy in Taiwan Since 2000**

In 2001, the MOE moved the teaching of English to the fifth grade (MOE, 2005b). One of the reasons for the move can be seen in the publication, *Challenge 2008: National Development Plan*. The first component of the plan dealt with the international living

environment of Taiwan (MOE, 2005a; see also MOE, 2005c). The idea was to increase the English proficiency of the people of Taiwan. Part of which included the starting of English classes for students in elementary school. The plan had three main parts: (a) English language learning starting in elementary school; (b) encouraging all people in Taiwan to improve their English; and (c) encouraging the use of English as the MOI for higher education in Taiwan (Chen, 2010).

Part of the reason for the change in policy was the promotion of internalization (Huang, 2005; MOE, 2005a; Scott & Tiun, 2007; Tsao, 2001). Tsao (2001) and Oladejo (2006) both discussed that the idea of teaching English in elementary school was tied to the need to continue to grow the economy along with other countries in the area (e.g., Korea) also teaching English in elementary school. The MOE (2011) stated that it was “also working to introduce English instruction at an earlier age, using materials and methods that will encourage students to learn in a productive and natural way” (p. 13).

### **Research Dealing with English Language Policy**

There have been many studies in Taiwan looking at English in elementary school. These have looked at the English language policy and English teaching overall (Chang, 2008; Chen, 2010; Chen & Tsai, 2012), students (Hsueh, 2009), teachers (Butler, 2004; Shen, 2003; Su, 2006), and parents (Chang, 2008; Oladejo, 2006; Shen, 2003; please see next section).

One of the main issues discussed was the lack of qualified English teachers (Butler, 2004; Oladejo, 2006; Scott & Tiun, 2007; Su, 2006). The MOE (2005b) stated that it would “offer preferential employment opportunities to teachers who have passed the *Examination for Certificate of Elementary School’s English Teachers* (「國小英語教學師資檢核」) and possess the certificate for Elementary School Teachers” (p. 13). In addition, there was also a program to hire native English speakers (foreign teachers) to teach (MOE, 2006, 2009). It seemed to follow the idea that “most parents prefer foreign teachers to their local counterparts” (Oladejo, 2006, p. 152). Unfortunately, this program of hiring foreign teachers has not succeeded in its goals (Oladejo, 2006).

Looking at Taiwanese English teachers, Butler (2004) found

that they rated their English skills higher than Korean or Japanese English teachers. In her study on elementary school English teachers in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, she found that Taiwanese teachers had higher means than Korean or Japanese teachers in many of the goals of English teaching. The biggest differences between the Taiwanese teachers and the other two groups were in: (a) "to acquire basic decoding skills"; (b) "to read some words or phrases"; and (c) "to carry on a simple conversation" (p. 259).

Other issues with the English language policy include: (a) lack of resources and students with diverse English abilities (Oladejo, 2006; Su, 2006); (b) limited teaching hours (Su, 2006); and (c) parental expectations (Chang, 2008; Su, 2006). Many of these are connected and are tied to socioeconomic issues. Those who have money are able to send their children to cram schools for extra lessons, while those who do not have money, can't. These poorer students fall behind and this situation leads to the diversity of English abilities in the classroom. In addition, the extra practice that students receive leads to higher expectations from the parents (Su, 2006).

### **Lack of Discussion from Parents to the English Language Policy**

A deep search was made to find as many studies on parents as possible. Shen (2003) was a pioneer in her study. Only two other studies (Oladejo, 2006; Chang, 2008) looked at this issue in Taiwan. It was hoped that Oladejo (2006) and Chang (2008) would give additional resources, but this was not the case.

Chang (2008) built on Oladejo's (2006) study. Oladejo (2006) found that there were significant differences based on income level to the starting age of English, with higher income parents wanting English to be started in kindergarten and lower income parents wanting it to start in fifth grade. Chang (2008) found a similar result in that 70% of the participants believed in the starting of English education in the first grade or before (p. 429).

Oladejo (2006) found that about 40% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that foreign teachers should be hired to teach students in elementary school and junior high school, with 26% uncertain (p. 163). Chang (2008) investigated deeper this issue by asking about the best qualified teachers. The study found that 57.9% of the participants believed a Taiwanese teacher with a solid English

background was the best teacher. This was 11% higher than native speakers with a degree in English or English education (p. 430).

One issue with Oladejo (2006) was that he created a five-point scale. This allowed his participants to have the option of choosing “uncertain” as a response. In several categories at least a fifth of the participants chose this response. Both Chang (2008) with a four-point scale and this study with a six-point scale have eliminated this option. This study developed a six-point scale as it was considered a better choice as it gave participants a wider scale for their answers.

## Research Questions

This study was undertaken in order to answer the following questions:

1. What are the opinions of parents toward English education in elementary school?
2. How have the opinions changed since Shen (2003)?

## Methodology

### Participants

Table 1

*Breakdown of the Participants*

	Gender		Age		Children <sup>a</sup>	
	Male	Female	30-39	40-49	1	2
Number	11	26	16	21	17	18
	English		Cram School		English in Home	
	Start	Should	Yes	No	Yes	No
Number	1.76 <sup>b</sup>	1.68 <sup>b</sup>	32	5	16	21

*Note.* Total (n=37); Children (Number of children in elementary school); Start (The grade that English starts); Should (The grade that English should start); Cram school (Do the children attend cram school?); English in Home (Is English used at home?).

<sup>a</sup>Two participants had three children in elementary school. <sup>b</sup>Mean.

Forty-one parents with at least one child in elementary school, filled out a Chinese questionnaire. Due to missing information, four questionnaires (9.76%) had to be removed, leaving 37 questionnaires. As a comparison, Shen (2003) had only 10 parents as participants. Table 1 has the breakdown of the participants in this study. It was surprising to find that in some cases English was used in the home. This is counter to Chen (2010) who found that English was not used much in the home. This question was a binary one (yes/no), so it is not possible to know how much English is actually used in the home. All of the participants came from a mid-sized city in Yunlin County (Taiwan).

### **Instrument**

The questionnaire for this study was built using Shen (2003) as the model. Several changes were made to her original questionnaire:

1. Shen (2003) collected data in 2002, at the beginning of the policy. Due to this time difference, some of the verbs had to be changed to fit the present tense.
2. Six items (original questionnaire Items 4, 8, 12, 18, 19, 24) were taken out as they did not fit the focus of this paper.
3. Ten items were added in order to gain more insights into the teaching of English in elementary school along with some basic opinions of English. These items had to be edited from the original in order to fit the focus of the paper. These new items came from: Butler (2004) [Items 24, 25]; Chang (2008) [Items 26, 27]; J.-A. Lee (2009) [Item 19]; Ling (2012) [Item 28]; Oladejo, (2006) [Item 4]; and Su (2006) [Items 8, 12, 18].

In addition to the changes above, the scale for this study was changed from a five-point scale (Shen, 2003) to a six-point scale. The scale was from 1 (Very Disagree) to 6 (Very Agree). Since the parents all understood Chinese, the English version of the questionnaire (see Appendix) had to be translated into Chinese.

### **Procedure**

After the Chinese version of the questionnaire was created, several bilingual Chinese-English speakers were asked to look at the questionnaire and give comments. Since most of the questionnaire



had already been used in a past study, and due to scheduling issues, there was no formal pilot study completed.

When the translated version of the questionnaire was finalized it was ready for the formal study. A parent helped to distribute some of the questionnaires at a local elementary school. In addition, they were also handed out at a local English cram school. After all of the questionnaires were collected the data were analyzed.

## Data Analysis

The questionnaire data were analyzed using the program Gnumeric in order to discover the means along with standard deviation (descriptive statistics). These were compared to Shen (2003). Due to the low numbers from Shen (2003), along with the data no longer being available, there was not the ability to preform any t-tests to look at significant differences between the two studies.

## Results and Discussion

### Research Question 1

The first question dealt with the opinions of the parents toward the English policy. Half of the items on the questionnaire (n=14) had a mean higher than 3.5 (slightly disagree to slightly agree), 17.9% of the items (n=5) had a mean higher than 4.5 (slightly agree to agree). The same percentage (n=5) had a mean lower than 2.5 (disagree). Table 2 shows the items with the highest means and Table 3 shows the items with the lowest means.

As can be seen, the item with the highest mean was Item 7 (Students will be encouraged to learn English more than other foreign languages (M=5.35)) with the lowest mean on Item 9 (Students in Yunlin have the same learning resources in their English classes as those in Taipei (M=2.27)).

Table 2

#### *Highest Means from Study*

R	It	Statement	Mean	SD
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1	7	Students will be encouraged to learn English more than other foreign languages.	5.35	0.68
2	24	English classes should focus on listening and speaking.	4.92	0.98
3	2	Learning English earlier helps students to learn English better.	4.78	1.34
4	13	English classes should focus on reading and writing.	4.59	1.48
5	21	Students who acquire better English abilities will be more successful in securing places in good High Schools/Colleges.	4.51	1.46

*Note.* R (Rank); It (Item number on questionnaire); SD (Standard Deviation).

Table 3

*Lowest Means from Study*

R	It	Statement	Mean	SD
24	26	It is not necessary to send children to English cram schools since English is taught in the elementary school.	2.46	1.12
25	10	English education starts too early in school.	2.43	1.44
26	28	English will become less important in the future due to the increase power of China.	2.38	1.21
27	12	English should be an elective and not a required class.	2.30	1.05
28	9	Students in Yunlin have the same learning resources in their English classes as those in Taipei.	2.27	1.54

*Note.* R (Rank); It (Item number on questionnaire); SD (Standard Deviation).

One key item to discuss is Item 28 (English will become less important in the future due to the increase power of China (M=2.38)). This was a new item not included in Shen (2003) and came from the

discussion in Graddol (2006), Ling (2012) and the National Intelligence Council (NIC) (2008). Even though no comparison from the past could be made as to changes in opinions, the low mean of the item shows that English is still considered important, no matter the current (or future) power of China. This is similar to Hong Kong where a recent study (Ling, 2012) showed that English is still considered important, with no change in the opinion since 2001.

This result shows a flaw in Graddol's (2006) argument about the future of English being tied to the rise of China. If this were true, then in the countries most affected by China (e.g., Taiwan and Hong Kong) one would expect to find the opinion that English is less important today than in the past. However, this is not the case and if anything English is seen as even more important today (Chen, 2010; P.-Y. Lee, 2009; News Staff 2012a). One further point as to the importance of English today comes from News Staff (2012b), in which the low TOEIC scores from Taiwan, as compared to those from Korea, were seen as "another embarrassment for Taiwan" (para. 3).

Two items were added from Butler (2004) [Items 24, 25] that dealt with what should be the focus of English in elementary school. Both items scored high. Listening/speaking skills (Item 24, M=4.92) were considered important as were reading/writing skills (Item 25, M=4.43). The difference shows the desire for students to develop good pronunciation and listening skills early. English listening ability is becoming more important in Taiwan. The College Entrance Examination Center is piloting a listening test that might be added in 2014 to the college (university) entrance exam. Currently students are only tested on their reading, writing, and grammar. At present this listening test is not a requirement, but "the test result can serve as a reference source for students' college applications" (Wang, 2010, p.2). Halic, Greenberg, and Paulus (2009) also discussed that one of the problems faced by international students in the USA is their low listening and speaking ability. They saw the overemphasis placed on reading, writing, and grammar in the EFL context (e.g., Taiwan) as the cause of this problem.

## **Research Question 2**

The second question dealt with the changes in the opinions of parents since Shen (2003). Since this study adapted a different scale it

is important to show how the two scales are matched. Table 4 shows the comparison of the two scales.

Table 4

*Comparison of Ranking Scales from Questionnaires*

Scale	This Study	Shen (2003)
	Meaning	Comparable Response
1	Very Disagree	(1) Completely Disagree
2	Disagree	(2) Disagree
3	Slightly Disagree	(2) Disagree/(3) Don't Know
4	Slightly Agree	(4) Agree/(3) Don't Know
5	Agree	(4) Agree
6	Very Agree	(5) Completely Agree

*Note.* (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) are the scales on Shen (2003).

As can be seen from Table 4, in order for an opinion to be classified as having changed since Shen (2003) it would need to show a more than one-point difference. Any item that showed a less than one-point difference, must be classified as having not changed since Shen (2003). Most of the comparable items fell within this range of being less than one-point different. Table 5 shows the items that had a higher than one-point difference.

As can be seen from Table 5, only four items showed any real change in the last 10 years. Of the 17 items that were comparable in the two studies (60.7% of items in this study), 76.5% (n=13) had a higher mean on this study than in Shen (2003), the other 23.5% (n=4) had a lower mean. This shows that there has been little change in the opinions of parents. The populations of the participants for both studies were similar, which could be the reason for the small change in opinions. In addition, there is the possibility that the low numbers of participants played into this issue (see limitations for more discussion). There is also the possibility that little has changed since the policy was started that would cause parents to have changed their opinions.

Table 5

*Means with Higher than One-Point Difference from Shen (2003)*

It	Statement	Shen (2003)	This Study	Dif
7	Students will be encouraged to learn English more than other foreign languages.	2.90	5.35	2.45
13	Using native English teachers will make learning English more interesting to students.	3.20	4.59	1.39
2	Learning English earlier helps students to learn English better.	3.60	4.78	1.18
17	Hiring more native English teachers is a good idea for students' English proficiency.	3.10	4.19	1.09

*Note.* It (Item number on this study's questionnaire); Dif (Difference in means between Shen (2003) and this study).

The biggest difference found was on item number 7 dealing with the learning of other foreign languages. It is almost two and half points higher in this study than in Shen (2003). Oladejo (2006) found similarly that most parents preferred English to any other foreign language. It is interesting that at the start of the policy change parents were neutral as to this question, however as this study and Oladejo (2006) have shown, English has become *the* foreign language for Taiwan. Part of this could also be from the continuing importance of English in Taiwan as can be seen from movies and forms of entertainment that are predominantly in English.

There was agreement that students should have more opportunities to learn other foreign languages (Item 18, M=4.00), however it is unlikely that this will be seen anytime soon. Some cram schools have begun to offer classes in other foreign languages, mainly Japanese, but the ratio of students taking Japanese to students taking English is presumed to be quite imbalanced.

Two of the other big differences dealt with the hiring of foreign teachers. In Shen (2003) both items had means just above 3 (don't know). However, in this study both fell into the slightly agree (means higher than 4). Both Chang (2008) and Oladejo (2006) looked at this issue of native English teachers and found that parents were supportive of hiring foreign English teachers.

The increase in the support for the hiring of foreign teachers from Shen (2003) possibly shows the influence of English cram schools, that advertise their foreign teachers to perspective parents. It appears that parents believe their children will learn English best from a native speaker (Oladejo, 2006). This point is further shown in the very slight disagreement that children should be taught to speak like an American (Item 19,  $M=3.84$ ). The main issue with this idea, is that the parents disagreed (Item 16,  $M=2.76$ ) that Yunlin County has the money to hire English teachers. The issue of resources must be dealt with, if Taiwan hopes to increase the English proficiency of all Taiwanese (MOE, 2005a).

The last item that had a major change from Shen (2003) was in the issue of earlier English being better for the learning of English (Item 2,  $M=4.78$ ). All studies looking at parents dealt with this issue. Each found that support for the early starting of English was quite high. When asked on this questionnaire when English should start the number of participants who stated grade one of elementary school was 70.3% ( $n=26$ ). This follows closely to Chang (2008) who found that 86.9% of participants wanted English to start before the second grade (p. 427). Oladejo (2006) didn't find as much support for before the second grade with only 50.5% supporting it (p. 160). Neither Chang (2006) nor this study had any parent state that English should start in junior high, but Oladejo (2006) had 5.9% support for this starting time (p. 160).

From this study and the others cited it appears that parents believe, possibly incorrectly, that earlier is better for the teaching of English (Chang, 2008; P.-Y. Lee, 2009; Teng, 2003). P.-Y. Lee (2009) cautioned that it was not merely the starting age of English that was important, but the motivation along with the ability of the students to use the language outside of the classroom, that would ultimately lead to success for the students in their English ability.

## Conclusion

### Summary of Major Findings

This study found that over the course of a decade the opinions of parents, at least in Yunlin County (Taiwan), have not changed much. Only six items showed either an identifiable change from Shen

(2003) or were trending in that direction. Instead of showing signs of slowing down, the desire for foreign teachers to be in elementary school classrooms in Taiwan is gaining support. In addition, while there is a desire for students to have the ability to learn other foreign languages, English is still believed to be the most important one for students in Taiwan and should be required for all elementary school students.

In looking at improvements, there still remain issues as to resource distribution. The item with the lowest mean in this study dealt with the resources available in Yunlin County, as opposed to Taipei, for English education (Item 9). This was one of the items that in the last decade has gone down from a mean of 2.50 (Shen, 2003) to a mean of 2.27 in this study. Not far ahead was Item 16 (M=2.76) dealing with the ability of Yunlin County to hire English teachers, some of whom are wished to be native speakers. There was also a concern as to the textbooks used in the schools (Item 27, M=2.57). Each of these issues must be addressed.

### **Limitations**

As Silvia (2007) wrote, “some limitations are genetic to all research” (p. 88). Besides the obvious limitations of the study (e.g., sample size, cross-sectional study) the most specific limitation was lack of sampling. This was due to the study being bound by geography. It was not possible to travel around Taiwan in order to hand out the questionnaire, which also had an effect on the sample size. A clearer picture might also have been developed had educational background (e.g., Chang, 2008) and the beginning of English education of the parents been added to the questionnaire.

### **Implications**

The popularity of learning English in Taiwan shows no signs of slowing down (Chen & Tsai, 2012). One way to see this, is to walk around any elementary school in Taiwan. One will find many English cram schools that offer after-school English classes. Many of these cram schools also use their foreign teachers in advertisements for the school. In addition, there are countless speech contests for students of all ages. Unfortunately, these activities and cram schools are not

available to every student due in part to issues of economics (Su, 2006). In this study, five participants (13.5%) reported not having their children in an English cram school. Item 26 (M=2.46) dealt with the importance of English cram schools. One idea to the early start of English was to make cram schools less important. As with other ideas behind the English policy, this one has also not worked out as planned. Parents in this study didn't see the elementary school English classes as enough for their children.

The main implication of this study is that Taiwan must do more to not only discover the opinions of the parents, but also ensure that all students have the same opportunities to learn English. If the idea of teaching English is to make Taiwan a more internationalized country (MOE, 2005a), then all students must have the same opportunities to learn the language and join in this goal. Part of realizing this goal is to ensure the resources available around Taiwan are as similar as possible. In both Shen (2003) and this study, the parents believed that the children in Yunlin County do not have the same resources as their counterparts in Taipei.

It is hope that this study will lead to more studies looking at parents and their opinions of English education in elementary school, along with English education in generally. This study has added to the literature on the topic and has found themes for future studies.

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### **About the Author**

**G. Benjamin White** has been teaching English in Taiwan since 2004. He is currently pursuing his doctoral degree in TESOL at National Changhua University of Education. Please feel free to contact him at: [whitegben@yahoo.com](mailto:whitegben@yahoo.com).

## Appendix Questionnaire (English Version)

English Language Policy in the Elementary School

Dear parent of an elementary school age child or children:

My name is G. Benjamin White and I am working on a study for a paper that will be used in one of my classes at National Changhua University of Education along with being published in a journal or at a conference. The study is looking at English teaching and language in Taiwan, from the perspectives of parents. If you agree to help, please fill out this questionnaire.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at whitegben@yahoo.com

Thank you!

Background

Gender (Circle):      Male                  Female

Age (Circle):            20-29                  30-39                  40-49                  Over 49

How many children in elementary school do you have? (Circle):

1      2      3      4+

In which grade does the teaching of English start at school? (Circle):

1      2      3      4      5      6

In which grade SHOULD the teaching of English start? (Circle):

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
11      12

Do you send your child(ren) to English cram school? (Circle): Yes

No

Do you use English in your daily life?    Yes    No

Circle <u>ONE</u> number for each statement (Please Circle <u>ONLY ONE</u> ) 1 (Very Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Slightly Disagree) 4 (Slightly Agree) 5 (Agree) 6 (Very Agree)						
1. The government provides enough resources for English teaching in the elementary schools.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Learning English earlier helps students to learn English better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Students consider learning English more important than learning Mandarin.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. English classes at the elementary school are too big.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. English teaching takes away from the teaching resources of other subjects (for example: Math).	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. The percentage of the Taiwanese population speaking English fluently will increase every year because of the earlier teaching of English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Students will be encouraged to learn English more than other foreign languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Students take too many English tests in elementary school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Students in Yunlin have the same learning resources in their English classes as those in Taipei.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. English education starts too early in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Improving students' English ability will help them learn Mandarin.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. English should be an elective and not a required class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Using native English teachers will make learning English more interesting to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Students have too much schoolwork in English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Having good English proficiency is more highly valued than having good Mandarin proficiency in elementary school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The government in Yunlin has enough money to hire English teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Circle <u>ONE</u> number for each statement (Please Circle ONLY ONE) 1 (Very Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Slightly Disagree) 4 (Slightly Agree) 5 (Agree) 6 (Very Agree)						
17. Hiring more native English teachers is a good idea for students' English proficiency.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Students should have the opportunity to take other foreign languages (for example: Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Schools should be teaching Children to speak like an American.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Elementary English classes are succeeding in their goals of improving students' English abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Students who acquire better English abilities will be more successful in securing places in good High Schools/Colleges.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. English will become the second national language of Taiwan someday.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. The government allows enough public debate on the teaching of English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. English classes should focus on listening and speaking.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. English classes should focus on reading and writing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. It is not necessary to send children to English cram schools since English is taught in the elementary school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. The textbooks used in the elementary school are adequate.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. English will become less important in the future due to the increase power of China.	1	2	3	4	5	6