

**Teaching and Learning English in Kindergartens in
Kaohsiung**

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1. Introduction

The importance of the English language is widely recognized in Taiwan. On one hand, the government encourages it for the internationalization of Taiwan. On the other hand, English is important for travel, international business, and an increased knowledge of technology and science.

English learning is very popular in Taiwan. This is evident by the increasing number of English cram schools¹ for children and adults in Taiwan. People in Taiwan believe that English is the most important foreign language; so they try to learn it well. Unfortunately, even after they graduate from university, most people cannot speak English well. One reason for this is the lack of training in English speaking and listening at school. Schools in Taiwan mainly focus on grammar. Therefore, many people send their children to language cram schools to learn English as early as possible with hopes that their next generation will conquer this problem. Another reason for the increase in number of children who have an early start in learning English is that parents in Taiwan feel they should provide their children with a competitive educational advantage as early as possible.

Although most parents want their children to learn English early, English instruction in Taiwan begins officially in junior high school. Since 1992, primary schools were allowed to begin English teaching as part of their extra curricular activities. From September 2001, English will be taught in primary schools

¹ English cram schools are private language schools like “Berlitz” which offer English classes.

during formal class time, for fifth and sixth grade students. However, this offer is not sufficient to meet the parents' and children's needs. Therefore, many pupils go to English cram schools. According to statistical data, there are two million children enrolled in primary schools in Taiwan and 50 % of them go to English cram schools. Not only primary school students, but also preschool children attend English cram schools. English cram schools offer courses for children at different levels and for different age groups. There are also English classes for children from the age of three. It is estimated that in the future there will be more cram schools which offer English classes for preschool children.

The market for English learning and teaching is so vast that many kindergartens in Taiwan offer English classes, too. Many kindergartens call themselves "bilingual" simply to attract parents, even though it is illegal². Furthermore, the kindergartens which do not offer English classes have less students enrolled. The result is that more and more kindergartens offer English classes.

During the semester in which the research was completed, the teaching period of English classes in kindergartens per day and per week was minimal. It is estimated that the teaching period will be increased in the future. It is also estimated that in the future, there will be more kindergartens which offer half day English classes with subjects, such as music, art, etc., which will be taught in English. The market for English classes for kindergarten children is estimated to increase. This is evident from the example of a leading language institute in

² There are no laws or rules regarding kindergarten English classes from the government. Therefore, according to the rules of the Ministry of Education, kindergartens should not put words, such as "bilingual", in their names.

Taiwan, which publishes English teaching materials. It has changed its concentration, from publishing teaching materials for elementary school children, to kindergarten children.

English learning is a trend in Taiwan. There have been some studies on English teaching and learning in primary schools, but there is not a study that concerns the actual conditions of the English classes in Taiwan's kindergartens. Parents spend large amounts of money every semester on English classes in kindergartens, with no assurance that their children are being taught efficiently and appropriately.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the situation of English learning and teaching in Kaohsiung's kindergartens and to answer the following questions:

1. How is the situation in Kaohsiung kindergartens at the moment?
2. How are the English classes in Kaohsiung kindergartens?
 - Are the English teachers of the bilingual kindergartens qualified?
 - What is their educational background?
 - What is the class size of the English classes in kindergartens?
 - How many days and minutes per week are the English classes?
 - What languages do the teachers use the most in English classes?
 - What are the nationalities of the English teachers?
 - What teaching methods are used in English classes in kindergartens?
 - What is the aim of English classes in kindergartens? Are good learning results the main concern, or do kindergartens just want to introduce foreign language to children in order to make initial learning experiences

pleasurable?

3. What are the opinions of kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and English teachers regarding an optimal kindergarten English course?
4. If kindergarten children are too young to do the review at home by themselves, do the parents help them at home to make English learning more effective?
5. English classes are expensive. Parents pay extra for an English course in kindergarten. It is hard for poor people to afford the costs. Public kindergartens are cheap, but they do not offer English classes. In view of equality for English learning opportunities between children from rich and poor families, should public kindergartens also offer English classes?
6. What can the government do to improve kindergarten English classes?

The primary sources of data for this research include literature reviews on foreign language acquisition in early childhood, observation, and questionnaires of kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and English teachers. The first chapter of this thesis is the introduction. The second chapter is concerned with theories about optimal learning age for foreign languages. The third chapter deals with the second language acquisition theory. In chapter four, the focus is on the factors for successful English learning for children. The following three chapters are concerned with kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung, analysis of the questionnaires and classroom observation.

It is hoped that this study will benefit kindergarten children, teachers and educators in Taiwan providing helpful suggestions and insight for kindergarten English classes. Moreover, it is hoped that this study will provide empirical data for policy making in Taiwan.

2. Theories about the optimal age for learning foreign languages

There are many reasons which may determine the effectiveness of one's language learning, such as method of instruction, age, aptitude, attitude and motivation (Schumann 1975: 229). Since kindergarten children are very young, age is an important concern. There have been innumerable studies on age differences in second language learning, and the conclusions of the studies were inconsistent. Some studies show that older learners are superior, others suggest younger. There are also some studies which support the idea that different ages have different advantages for foreign language learning. In the following section we will take a look at the different theories and studies trying to answer the following questions:

Is there an optimal age to learn English and if so what is it?

Are the ages between 3 and 6 (the ages of kindergarten children) suitable ages for foreign language learning?

What advantages may children benefit from when they learn English in early childhood?

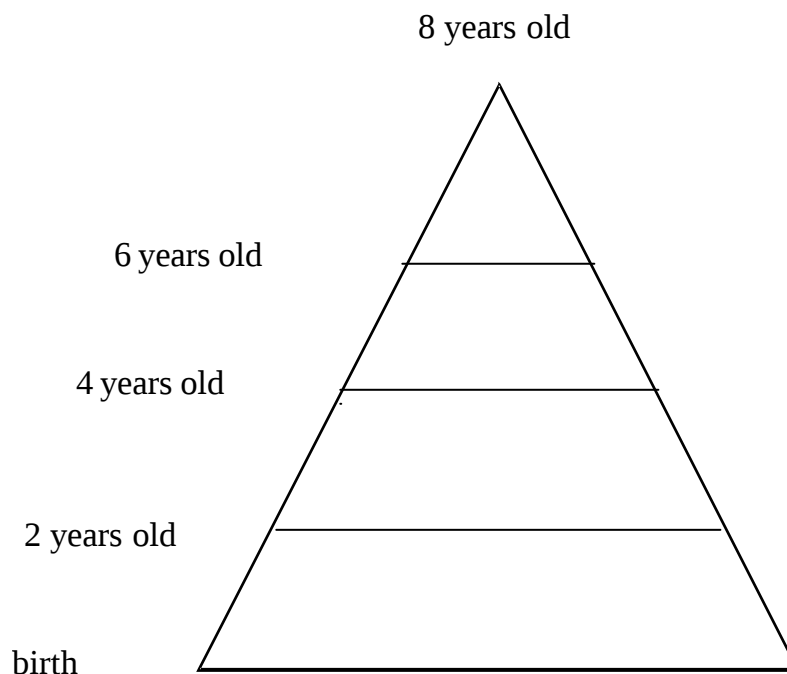
2.1 Theories and studies that support foreign language learning in early childhood

The main theory which claims that foreign language learning should begin from early childhood is the theory that “childhood education should begin from birth” from Japanese educator Makoto Shichita (Shichita 2000a, 2000b, 2000c).

Another often-mentioned hypothesis regarding the optimal age for language learning is “the critical period hypothesis”. However, it is difficult to define whether “the critical period hypothesis” is favored in early or late childhood because the accomplishment of “lateralization” is still disputable. In spite of that, I will put the hypothesis in this section.

Childhood education should begin from birth

The theory from the Japanese educator Makoto Shichita is an important theory which states that childhood education should begin as early as possible. His theory that “childhood education should begin from birth” also supports an early beginning for foreign language learning.



Shichita believes that childhood education should begin from birth. He insists that babies are geniuses at learning things and they have brains as good as computers. However, their learning talent and ability decrease year by year. That means babies at age zero have a superior ability for learning things. This talent decreases gradually with age. If we do not take advantage of their talent at a young age by teaching them appropriately, this talent will disappear at age eight (Liu 1985: 24). Shichita explained this theory with the graph above.

A baby's superior talent also offers a benefit in foreign language learning. Shichita insists that children beyond age six find it harder to memorize vocabulary compared with three-year-old children. Furthermore, Shichita indicates that a three-year-old-child is more willing to learn vocabulary than a six-year-old-child. Shichita strongly suggests the importance of teaching children as early as possible before their superior ability atrophies. He believes that it is a pity to let children grow up without giving them appropriate learning stimuli.

Some people believe that small children are too young for foreign language learning. They think children may confuse their second language with their first language because their first language competence is not fully developed. Shichita has an opposite opinion. He believes that children between 3 and 6 years old are at the optimal age for learning foreign languages because this is when children learn their first languages, they can use the same method to learn foreign languages (Shichita 2000a: 168).

Schichita also contends that if children learn a foreign language during the ages of 3 to 6, they can easily memorize the pronunciation and grammar accurately. Although they interrupt the foreign language learning for a short period of time, they can recall the accurate pronunciation when they learn the language again in the future (Shichita 2000b: 128/129).

There are some studies which found that children can learn two or more languages simultaneously without inter-lingual interference. They do not have to wait until their first language is good enough in order to learn a second language. For example, a teacher of foreign languages, Geissler (1938), reported that he had observed young children acquire up to four languages simultaneously, without difficulty (Garcia 1982: 58).

Shichita's theory that "education should begin from birth" is well known in Japan. It covers many subjects, such as mathematics, reading, language and memorization ability. Many children in Japan have followed his method for learning and have had an excellent level of success. I have used some of his methods to teach my niece (3 years old) English. I showed her picture flash cards quickly once or twice per day and said the words in English at the same time. She repeated after me at a rapid speed. It took only a few minutes every time. For her, the learning is just like a game. She loves it, and can memorize vocabulary well.

Originally, Shichita adopted the opinion that "education should begin from birth" from the book by a German priest, Karl Witte. The book was published in 1818 in Germany with the German title "Erziehung- und Bildungsgeschichte desselben", and was later translated to English by a Harvard University professor

with the English title “The Education of Karl Witte” (Liu 1985: 18).

Karl Witte believed that the intelligence of children is not hereditary, but results from education which should begin between birth and the age of 6. Karl Witte conducted an experiment on his son, whose name was Karl Witte. He began the education of his son when his son was a few months old. He taught him reading and writing. Little Karl Witte could read and write German and Latin at age 6. Later, he learned French. Within less than one year, he could read easy French books. After that he learned Greek. He could read Greek books within less than 6 months. By the time he was 8 years old he had learned many languages: German, Latin, French, Italian, English and Greek. Little Karl Witte studied at Leipzig University at age 10, got his Doctorate of philosophy degree at age 12, and got a doctorate degree in law at age 16, and became a professor at Berlin University (Liu 1985: 17-23).

Glenn Doman gave a similar example. In his book he described a nine-year-old-boy who could read and write nine languages. He said that the boy was not particularly intelligent. After birth, the boy lived in Cairo and in his living environment he often heard French, Arabic and English. He lived with his grandfather who came from Turkey and learned Turkish from him. When he was four years old, his family moved to Israel. He lived with his grandmother who came from Spain. In Israel he learned Hebrew, German and another language that Jewish people speak. Later, he moved to Brazil and learned Portuguese. His father also spoke 5 languages. The boy could speak most of the eight languages fluently, except Portuguese. He could not speak Portuguese as well as the other languages because he learned it after age 6 (Liu 1985: 26).

The example above provides evidence that children's learning ability, including the ability of learning foreign languages, decreases with the increase of their age. Therefore, children should begin their foreign language learning early, so that they can learn it most effectively.

Liu (1985: 28) cited a study in Canada, which concluded that "the direct teaching method"³ is appropriate when teaching a foreign language to children between zero to 9 years old. With this method children can even learn 3 languages simultaneously and will not confuse the different languages. However, the direct teaching method is not optimal for children beyond 9 years old. For children beyond 9 years old, it is better to use their first language to explain concepts in class. In addition, it is also necessary to teach grammar to children older than nine years. Moreover, the study concluded that children beyond 12 years old might find it difficult to learn a foreign language and might easily confuse it with different languages (Liu 1985: 28).

Many studies show that if children begin to learn a foreign language before they are 6 years old, they can achieve higher levels of second language proficiency. When people begin to learn a foreign language at the age of 13 or 14, they cannot attain the achievement as if they are native speakers.

In addition to Shichita's theory, another theory that supports early age foreign language acquisition is the critical period hypothesis.

³ The direct method is a foreign language teaching method, which uses only the target language to

The critical period hypothesis

The critical period hypothesis supports the opinion that foreign language learning should begin early. *The critical period hypothesis* claims that there is a biological timetable for language acquisition, and in that period, language can be acquired more readily and beyond this time, language acquisition becomes increasingly difficult. When is the “critical period”? Much of the neurological argument considers that the critical period is the time of the accomplishment of “lateralization”. According to neurological research, certain functions are assigned as the human brain matures – it is called “lateralization”. It has been found that after lateralization is completed, people have difficulty acquiring a second language with nativelike pronunciation and precision. *The critical period hypothesis* claims that during the process of lateralization, language acquisition is easy and quick. However, there are different opinions about when lateralization of the brain actually occurs. While Eric Lenneberg (1967) contended that the development of lateralization is completed around puberty, Stephen Krashen (1973) argued that the process of lateralization might be completed around age five (Brown 1987: 42, 43).

Although the theory of “the critical period hypothesis” is disputable, there are many other studies which conclude that foreign language learning in young children is better than adults.

Other studies which support foreign language learning at an early age

Penfield and Roberts (1959) have similar opinions to Shichita and claim “that a young child’s brain is uniquely well adapted for language learning” (Johnstone 1994: 33). During the first decade of life, “multiple languages may be learned perfectly, with little effort, and after this, attempts to learn other languages would meet only moderate success” (Johnstone 1994: 33).

Hawkins and Towell (1994) reported that “non-English-speaking children aged 3-7 arriving in the United States attained native speaker performance, whereas new arrivals aged 7-39 did not” (cited from Johnstone 1994: 60). Even though the 7-39 age group stay in the U.S. for a long period of time (5 years), it does not change. Furthermore, younger beginners can benefit from both natural acquisition and conscious learning (Johnstone 1994: 60).

Research in neuropsychology indicates that the brain of a younger learner is malleable and is shaped by its own activity. However, the brain of an older learner is stable and is not as equipped to reorganize itself (Shrum / Glisan 2000: 76). The reason is that after the age of two, the brain will tap previously unused brain matter for new tasks. When one matures, “more of the brain is used for new functions, and there is less uncommitted capacity to access” (Shrum / Glisan 2000: 76). The research proposed that beginning to learn foreign languages in early childhood is better than beginning to learn them in adolescence or adulthood.

Tokyo University conducted research to test whether the university students

from Japan and America could distinguish the sounds between “l” and “r”. The study concluded that while all the American students could distinguish the sounds between “l” and “r” with one hundred percent accuracy, only two Japanese students from all the students studied, could achieve this. They found out later that the two Japanese students had lived in America before they were six years old. This study showed that it benefits children to start learning foreign languages before 6 years old (Liu 1985: 111).

The study of Yamada et al (Yamada et al 1980: 246) on three groups of children who are 7, 9 and 11 years old respectively, showed that younger children learn foreign words faster than older children.

Yamada et al believed that “the young children have better rote-memory and better motor ability than the older children” (Yamada et al 1980: 246).

“Rote-memory involves the ability to retain the association of words with the corresponding pictures (or meaning), while motor ability involves the accurate pronunciation of unfamiliar sounds” (Yamada et al 1980: 246). Older children are less equipped to memorize vocabulary than younger children because the memorization abilities of older children deteriorate with age. In addition, older children have difficulty in imitating sounds. According to Yamada et al, “if the children cannot imitate the sounds, they will have difficulty in making the association between sound and meaning” (Yamada et al 1980: 246). Because vocabulary is important in foreign language learning and the capacity of one’s vocabulary influences a person’s foreign language level, younger children’s superior ability to acquire vocabulary indicates that young children are better foreign language learners than older children. Oyama (1976) also had the same

finding as Yamada et al, “that younger children in learning English as a second language under natural conditions, acquire English phones better than older children” (Yamada et al 1980: 246).

Examples of second / foreign language learning in kindergartens in other countries

We have seen many studies about the advantages of young children in second language learning in the description above. In the following text, we will take a look at literature concerning second / foreign language learning in kindergartens.

In 1947 there was already a successful example about second language teaching in a kindergarten in Istanbul. The twenty students in the class were from many nationalities. E.V. Gatenby (1947) described the children in the kindergarten:

”After nine months these children have, for all practical purposes, become English as far as speech is concerned. They understand everything that their teacher says, they obey orders, they recite and sing, they talk to each other and even squabble in English. Only in reading, writing and extent of vocabulary do they seem at this stage to be a little behind pupils of the same age in England; and this gap soon disappears as they progress up the school. I went round testing individuals while they were busy drawing or modeling, and spoke to them in normal, idiomatic English, as their teacher did. Not once was there any hesitation in reply, and no sign of mental translation such as one finds in a secondary-school class of older children.” (Gatenby 1947: 178).

One reason that the children in this kindergarten could learn English so well is that they could not communicate with each other in any language other than English since they all spoke different languages. This example also showed that children have a gift in foreign language learning which adults cannot compare with.

In America and Canada there have been many foreign language or second language programs, e.g. immersion programs⁴ and FLES (foreign language in the elementary school). Some of these programs begin from kindergarten and many of them have shown positive effects. “Many studies have shown that immersion pupils achieve as well as or better than their monolingual peers in the content subjects, even though they have learned those subjects through the second language” (Anderson/Rhodes 1983: 4). Other studies also document that “a second language in an elementary school curriculum may positively affect the young child’s general school achievement and linguistic progress” (Donoghue, 1965, Potts, 1967; Smith 1967; cited from Wiley 1985: 2). In high school, it “may result in a significantly higher gain in mental maturity compared to that realized by non-FLES students during the same period”(Brega, 1967; 1965;Donoghue, 1965; Vocolo, 1967; cited from Wiley 1985: 2). These positive results should also have their effect on children who begin to learn foreign languages in kindergarten.

⁴ In immersion programs, the usual curriculum activities are conducted in a second language. There are two kinds of immersion programs: total-immersion program and partial-immersion program. “In total immersion programs, the second language is used for the entire school day during the first two or three years of the program. In partial-immersion programs, instruction takes place in the second language for

Will the learning of a foreign language help pupils with their first language?

Concerning foreign language learning, many parents will ask the same question.

Will early foreign language learning harm the development of native language?

The answer to this question is disputable, as is the answer to the question of the optimal age of learning a foreign language. There are both positive and negative opinions.

Some studies show that learning a second language would impede children's native language development because young children are not yet proficient in their first language. However, more recent studies (e.g. studies from Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri 1993 in Australia, studies from Pinto and Pilotti 1993 in Italy, studies from Rodriguez et al 1995 and from Winsler et al 1997) provide evidence that pupils who learn a foreign language are at an advantage in learning their first language as well (Johnstone 1994: 54).

The methods of the study from Winsler et al (1997) are similar to the study from Rodriguez et al (1995), and with similar results. The sample of the study from Winsler et al (1997) involved Spanish-speaking children attending a bilingual preschool, between the ages of 3.5 and 5 years old. The study concluded that participation in a high-quality bilingual preschool program does not impede native language development, but significantly enhances both native and second languages. Therefore, there is no need to worry that learning a foreign language will have a negative influence on a child's first language.

part (usually at least half) of the school day" (Anderson/Rhodes 1983: 4).

From the description above, we know that children from zero to 6 years old are at the optimal age for foreign language learning, and the younger the better. However, children before two years old are too young for group teaching. Therefore, it is better to let children visit English classes “as soon as they are old enough to accept the social requirements demanded by group teaching” (Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 97). According to my observation in English classes for young children, I believe the most suitable age for children to visit language courses is from three to four years old. Children in Taiwan start to visit kindergarten at about three to four years old. Children younger than three years old will often cry in the classroom because they want to have their mothers beside them. The crying of one child will disturb other children and the teaching.

Advantages of young children in foreign language learning in comparison with adults

In addition to the advantages described previously, there are many other advantages for foreign language learning in early childhood. Curran (1961) believes that children are less threatened by the sounds of the new language and are willing to depend on others for support in learning. Therefore, they acquire second languages more easily than adults (Schumann 1975: 230). The research by David Singleton (1989), the most comprehensive and authoritative academic account of research on age and foreign language, also concludes that childhood surpasses adulthood in second language learning (Johnstone 1994: 63). Young children are more willing to learn new things. “At no other time in life does the human being display such enthusiasm for learning, for living, for finding out”

(Pluckrose 1979: 27, cited from Dunn 1990: 1).

Some studies show that if children learn a foreign language at an early age, their listening comprehension manifests the most obvious progress and influence on competence of that language in future learning, especially when they continue learning it for a few years. The progress is particularly evident in speaking and listening (Pan 1997: 14).

Children who begin to learn a foreign language at preschool age are likely to have more time available than those beginning in primary school or high school. If children begin learning earlier, they save time and effort in the future. If children learn a foreign language from an early age, they may have the opportunity to learn more vocabulary and sentences than adult beginners. Moreover, young beginners have more time for learning than adults, so they can take their time and learn slowly. They do not have to memorize so much vocabulary or so many sentences, as adults do, in order to learn quickly. Therefore, they can memorize even better than adults (Chang, Hsiang-chin 2000: 33).

Adult foreign language learners may become very capable in communicating with the foreign language, but in accent, word choice, or grammatical features they will not achieve the language proficiency like native speakers or speakers who began learning the language at a very young age (Lightbown/Spada 1993: 42). Many adults, although they have attained fluency, still retain an accent (Dunn 1990: 7). On the contrary, people who learn a foreign language from early childhood can speak without an accent. Younger learners have more opportunity

to learn languages step by step, e.g. they do not have to express complicated ideas from the beginning, they do not experience strong pressure to speak fluently, and their early imperfect utterances are often praised. Older learners often encounter situations which demand complex language and the expression of complicated ideas from the very beginning of their learning. Moreover, they may get embarrassed or frustrated if they cannot express exactly what they mean (Lightbown/Spada 1993: 42).

Many overseas university students exemplify this point, struggling ineffectively with the foreign language, in spite of their strong desire and motivation. However, their children, especially those who were born in the foreign country or went there before the age of 3, have no difficulty acquiring the foreign language. I can give two examples:

I know two Chinese families, Family A and Family B. When Family A went to Germany, their child was 3 years old and did not speak any German. The child visited a kindergarten in Germany. He learned German quickly in the kindergarten and could communicate and play with other children. When family B went to Germany, their child was 6 years old and did not speak any German, either. The child of family B also visited a kindergarten but she did not learn any German there. Although she was lively and liked to talk a lot, when she met people who spoke Chinese in kindergarten, she just played alone because she could not communicate with other children in German. After one year, the situation did not change. She still could not communicate with other children in German and continued playing by herself. One of the reasons for her lack of German language acquisition could have been that the family knew that they

would leave Germany after one year, so they did not encourage their daughter to learn German. However, the main reason could be that at age 3, it is relatively easy for children to acquire a foreign language naturally. For children older than age 6, it is already more difficult to acquire a foreign language naturally.

The advantages of learning foreign languages at an early age are:

1. Children have great potential in developing accurate pronunciation, accent and fluency.
2. Young children have the ability to learn two languages simultaneously without suffering from inter-lingual interference (Pan 1997: 14)
3. Children's mastery of listening and speaking is better than adults. Learning a second language earlier might not have impacts on their first language.
4. Children are excellent mimics of sound and intonation patterns, which helps them in foreign language learning (Gladys C. Lipton: FLES (k-8) programs for the year 2000).
5. Young children are willing to use language and to experiment with sounds, without worrying about mistakes. Adolescents and adults are less willing to do so (Dunn 1990: 3).
6. Young children are excited and willing to learn new things. This motivates them to learn foreign languages and to memorize vocabulary.
7. Foreign language learning enhances cognitive development and basic skill performance in young children (Curtain, Helena 1990).

2.2 Theories and studies that support foreign language learning in late childhood or adulthood

According to Sorenson's (1967) research, adults may also acquire more languages at the same time, when they are exposed to them in their environment. Adults can also make themselves successful learners because they have a higher cognitive ability (Brown 1987: 45).

In this section, I will describe different theories and studies which support the optimal age of language learning in late childhood, adolescence or adulthood. Then, I will make comments on the studies.

Cognitive considerations

According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, puberty is the most critical stage for second language acquisition (Brown 1987: 47). He outlined that the course of intellectual development in a child occurs through various stages:

1. The sensorimotor stage – from 0 to 2 years old.
2. The preoperational stage – from 2 to 7 years old.
3. The concrete operational stage – from 7 to 11 or 12 years old.
4. The formal operational stage – from 12 years old to adulthood.

Around the age of 11, there is a crucial change from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage. Piaget claimed that puberty is the most critical stage for language acquisition because it is the period “that a person

becomes capable of abstraction, of formal thinking which transcends concrete experience and direct perception” (Brown 1987: 47 / Chou, yi-fen 2000: 23).

Criticisms of Piaget’s Cognitive considerations

Piaget’s theory has been criticized. Ausubel (1964) disagreed with the opinions of Piaget and hinted that although adults possess superior cognitive capacity, in fact, they often do not successfully learn a second language. On the contrary, children, without the “benefit” of formal operational thought, do learn second languages well. Although adults, with formal operational thought, could profit from certain grammatical explanations and deductive thinking, it is hard to say that adults can really profit from such explanations since it also depends on the suitability of the explanation of the teacher (Brown 1987: 47). Moreover, in communication, adults do not have much time for grammatical thinking, but children with intuitive learning perform better than adults in the area of second language acquisition.

From my personal experience, I also disagree that puberty is the most critical stage for second language acquisition. The evidence can be found in Taiwan. English classes were started in junior high school in Taiwan for many decades, and the students of junior high schools are at the age of puberty. Many of us experienced difficulty in learning English. Pronunciation and the memorization of a lot of vocabulary were both difficult aspects for us to learn. In junior high school, students had to learn many subjects and had a lot of pressure. Students also had to spend much time memorizing English vocabulary, phrases and grammar. From my experience and from the people I know, I do not think we benefited much from a greater “cognitive capacity” in learning a foreign

language, although we started to learn a foreign language from puberty. For many people in Taiwan, English is the subject in which they get a low score. Since their mastery of English is poor, they are not interested in English after they leave schools or colleges. That is why many adults in Taiwan, even 20 to 30 year old young people, do not speak English. Even for the students who were more successful in learning English, the experience was not joyful because they had to work very hard to memorize a lot of vocabulary and phrases for their examinations. As already mentioned above, young children can learn foreign languages with less stress and have more time to learn them. They can learn slowly and happily with many games in class. If they start learning English in kindergarten and continue the learning for a few years in primary school, they will have a better chance of developing a high level of foreign language proficiency.

Other studies which support foreign language learning in late childhood or adulthood and the criticisms of them

There are also many studies that provide evidence that children acquire a second language slower than adults. Soto (1991: 32) indicated that young children, in comparison with adults in second language acquisition, perform poorer with the exception of pronunciation.

An immersion program in Canada showed that early immersion students (beginning in kindergarten) have an advantage in speaking and listening, but late immersion students (beginning at age 13) appear to have an advantage in reading and writing (Johnstone 1994: 51).

“Politzer and Weiss (1969) have suggested that initial pronunciation and retention of vocabulary increase with age. Ervin-Tripp (1974) has reported that in her study, older children learned number, gender and syntax more rapidly than younger children” (Fathman: 246).

The article in ERIC document ED350885 argued that it is more difficult for children to learn a second language because “children do not have access to the memory techniques and other strategies that more experienced learners use in acquiring vocabulary and in learning grammatical rules.” I do not agree with this argument because children learn their first language without having to utilize memory techniques first. At a young age they can learn second languages well without learning grammatical rules and memory techniques, too.

The study which is often cited as evidence that adults are better in foreign language learning than children was the study of Asher and Price. Asher and Price (1967) gave training in Russian to children from 8 to 14 years old and to college students, by studying their listening comprehension. They claimed that when adults learn a second language under the same conditions as children, the adults are superior. In their study, there were four age groups: children from second grade, fourth grade, eighth grade, and a group of college students. Each age level was divided into two groups. One group was called act-act-group. In this group students were to imitate an adult model who physically responded to Russian commands to stand, sit, walk, stop, turn, squat. The other group was called observe-act-group. The conditions in observe-act group were the same as those for act-act-group, except that students sat silently in their chairs and

imagined that they were acting along with the model. Each utterance was presented 10 times in a random sequence. There were retention tests immediately after the training, 24 hours later, and 48 hours later.

After each retention test, new training was followed by increasingly complex commands, such as: pick up the paper and pencil and put them on the chair; walk to the door, pick up the pencil, put it on the table, and sit on the chair. The study concluded that adults are superior to children in second language learning. Moreover, children and adults in the act-act-group performed quite like the children and adults in the observe-act-group.

My criticisms to the experiment above are:

1. Children learn foreign languages slower than adults at the beginning, but over the course of time, children will catch up to or surpass adults. Adults have the advantages in the early stages of second language learning because of their cognitive maturation. The experiment only lasted 48 hours. Therefore, adults did the tests better than children.
2. The tests only covered the area of listening comprehension. The areas of pronunciation and communication, in which children often excel, were not covered in this study. It is not fair to conclude that adults are better in foreign language learning than children only through tests of listening comprehension within 48 hours.

The study was also criticized by Yamada et al (1980) who argued the results by pointing out three inadequacies of their experimental controls:

1. The experimental groups were not from a normal school population, but from a college group, who usually consisted of top high school graduates.
2. The high school group could already have had some experience in learning other foreign languages, while the younger group did not.
3. In the experiment, children had to give action responses when target sentences were presented. Yamada argued that “children might pay more attention to the action rather than to the sentence.”

Another study which concludes that adolescents are better equipped than children and adults at learning a foreign language is the study from Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (Snow/Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978: 1114-1128 / Lightbown and Spada 1993: 46-49). Their research is especially valuable because their subjects include children as young as three years old, adolescents and adults. They studied 51 English speakers who were learning Dutch as a second language. The 51 subjects were divided into five age groups: 3-5 year olds, 6-8 year olds, 8-10 year olds, 12-15 year olds, and adults. Their learning process was followed for a period of one year. “All the subjects were learning Dutch by “picking it up” at school or at work, with little or no formal instruction” (Snow/Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978: 1115).

The learners were tested three times at four-five month intervals. The first test was within six months of their arrival in Holland and within 6 weeks of their starting school or work in a Dutch language environment. The learners were tested in pronunciation, auditory discrimination, morphology, sentence repetition task, sentence translation task, sentence judgement task, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, story comprehension task, and storytelling task.

The children and adolescents (the 3-15 year olds) were all attending Dutch schools. That means they were exposed to a Dutch language environment at least 30 hours a week. The adult men worked in a Dutch language environment, but most of their Dutch colleagues spoke English well. Therefore, they did not use Dutch as a working language. The adult women were all housewives and thus had less contact with Dutch. Most of the adults also took courses in Dutch, but the courses did not exceed 26 hours of total class time in any case. Therefore, if exposure to Dutch is considered a crucial variable in determining speed of acquisition, one would expect the adults to learn more slowly than younger groups.

The results of the study showed that the age groups 12-15 and adult had the highest score in the first test session. At the end of the first year, the 8-10 and 12-15 year olds were the groups who retained the highest levels of performance. The 3-5 year olds scored lowest on all the tests.

I think the deficiency of this study is that the study only follows the learning process of the learners for one year. As we know, young children learn slower. One year is not long enough for young children to catch up to adults in some areas. Over a longer period of time, they will catch up or surpass adolescents or adults. Therefore, we cannot conclude that adolescents and adults learn faster than young children, merely from the test scores after one year of learning. Moreover, when we think about the first language capacity of 3-5 year old children, we will know that we expect too much of their second language capacity. It is hard to judge the level of young children, adolescents and adults

using the same standard.

Lightbown and Spada (1993: 48) also picked out three points to criticize concerning the results of the study. For the interest of this dissertation, I will only outline two of them:

1. Some of the tests were too hard for young learners and even beyond children's cognitive capacities.
2. "While adults and adolescents learn faster in the early stages of second language development, young children eventually catch up and even surpass them if their exposure to the language takes place in contexts where they are surrounded by the language on a daily basis. In other words, adults and adolescents learn at a faster rate, while children surpass adults and adolescents in eventual attainment." (Lightbown and Spada 1993: 49).

Criticisms to the studies which favor adult learners

Some studies favor older learners in foreign language learning. Johnstone (1994: 62) used three points to indicate that some of these studies had dubious design features. First, some researches controlled the variable of teaching method.

Therefore, the different age groups would be taught in the same way. In fact, it is not appropriate to do so. Furthermore, some assessments, e.g. cloze tests which are based on filling in gaps in a text, would be more suitable for adults.

Children's failure to do well in a cloze test should not indicate a lack of competence in the foreign language, as it may only emphasize their lack of experience with cloze tests or lack of cognitive maturity.

Second, in many recent studies, a lot of factors, e.g. age, time spent learning,

distribution of time, and teaching approach were investigated together. Since the factors are so interconnected, “this makes the drawing of conclusions about any one factor difficult.” (Johnstone 1994: 62).

Third, most of the outcomes of the studies are measured by tests, but in fact there is not much information on how the outcomes are realized (Johnstone 1994: 62).

2.3 Learners of different ages have different advantages in foreign language learning

Yamada et al (1980) suggested that for learning foreign languages, “there are different optimum ages, depending upon which particular aspect of language and which particular learning conditions are being considered” (Yamada et al 1980:245). Adults learn more consciously and “develop an explicit knowledge of grammar that will be useful in reading and writing, and negotiate their way through events”, while children are more likely to attain “the almost native-speaker levels of pronunciation, intonation and intuitive knowledge of structure” (Johnstone 1994: 34).

In fact, learners of different ages have different characteristics. Fathman investigated two groups of children, 6-10 and 11-15 years of age. He suggested that while older children perform better in the production of correct morphological and syntactic structures, young children are superior in pronunciation (Fathman 1975: 249).

Studies reported by Krashen, Long and Scarcella (1979) gave evidence that adults are better than children in second language learning. Moreover, adolescents acquire a second language faster than children. However, if young children are exposed to a natural language environment, they are likely to achieve higher levels of second language proficiency (Soto 1991:32). Therefore, English classes in kindergartens should take advantage of this characteristic and offer children an appropriate environment in which to develop a second

language.

“On developmental grounds each age in life probably has its peculiar advantages and disadvantages for language learning.” (Johnstone 1994: 63). We should, as the Canadian researcher H H Stern (1976) stated, avoid the false dichotomy between the theory of early age learning and the theory of later language learning (Johnstone 1994: 63). More importantly, we should concern ourselves with the different characteristics between ages and develop the appropriate teaching methods.

Conclusion

From the description above, we know that children are able to learn foreign languages more naturally and easily than adults. Studies indicate that for foreign language learning, it is the earlier the better.

Although there are also studies which claim that adults or adolescents are better language learners than children, one thing that can be assured is; if teachers, teaching materials and learning environments are appropriate, it is beneficial to learn foreign languages in early childhood.

Although there are many benefits with an early start in learning English, it is not the only factor that fosters English competence. Personal interest, teaching materials, methodology, classroom management, the frequency of teaching English per week, family background, and the help of parents in doing review

also determine second language learning effectiveness.

Simply starting to learn a second language in early age cannot assure that the student will learn better than others who start to learn at an older age. Chapter three will discuss the factors that are important for successfully learning a second language. In the next section, I would like to provide the examples of my two nieces who started to learn English since they were 3.5 years old. The examples give evidence of successful foreign language learning through an early start, good English teachers and the help of parents with review.

2.4 Excursion: The examples of my nieces

I support the theory that children learn a foreign language better when they begin to learn it at about three or four. At that age, children are learning knowledge using the same method they employ for first language development. If they learn a foreign language at that time, and learn terms and knowledge through the foreign language, they may memorize the vocabulary of the foreign language better. Learning foreign languages will also contribute to their intellectual development.

I would like to use my nieces as examples.

The example of my niece Sandy

I will present two of my nieces as examples of learning English as a foreign language in early childhood. One of my nieces, Sandy, born in January 1996, has started to learn English in a private English cram school since she was three years and six months old. When I write this section, at the end of the year 2000, she is four years and six months old. In other words, it is one year after she has started to learn English. She enjoys the English class and learns with efficiency.

Her English class is 5 days (Monday through Friday) per week at 3 hours per day. The tuition is NT\$ 140 per hour⁵. It is about NT\$ 10000 for one month. On average, it is quite expensive for many families in Kaohsiung and in Taiwan.

⁵ 1US dollar is about NT\$32.8.

I will describe Sandy's English learning from different aspects:

1. A successful example of using only English in class

In the cram school Sandy attends, all English teachers are native speakers of English; and most of them do not speak Chinese. In the classroom, there is not a Chinese assistant to help teachers to explain in Chinese. That means only English is used in the classroom, even at the beginning when children do not know any English. Although the teachers only use English, the children understand them well. I think that is because the English teachers use body language and they often employ concrete objects as teaching aids to help them explain. For example, in Sandy's class, they read the book "Goldilocks and the three bears." The book contains vocabulary such as "porridge", "salt" and "sweet". Sandy told us that her teacher brought real porridge to class and let every student eat a spoonful of it. That is why Sandy can understand the meaning and remember the words so well.

Some teachers at that cram school have taught in elementary schools in their own countries before they came to Taiwan. Therefore, they already have the experience of teaching children before they work in Taiwan. Besides that, the cram school also gives their teachers training in teaching young children English.

The English teachers at Sandy's cram school use a method similar to the way parents teach their children to learn their first language. In Sandy's class, the 10 students are between 3 and 5 years old. The English teacher explains with body

language, pictures, flash cards and concrete objects. He lets the students repeat the vocabulary and the sentences that he says. I think it is a good method for young learners. They just have to learn many sentences by heart, and then they can speak English automatically.

Without explanation in Chinese and without teaching grammar, the students understand what the teacher has taught. Sandy likes to tell us what she learned and what she has done at her English cram school every day when she returns home. We noticed that some vocabulary that Sandy learns, she does not even know in Chinese, but she understands the meaning from her English teacher's explanations in English. It provides evidence that teaching young children foreign languages without the aid of their first language will not cause comprehension problems, if the teacher can explain using body language or teaching aids. The advantage of teaching young children a foreign language with a target language⁶ is that children do not have to transfer the language into the students' first language.

2. The English class provides the children a knowledge of the world and a knowledge of the nature

Sandy's textbooks have a variety of different subjects, with many colorful pictures and a lot of vocabulary and sentences which are useful in daily life. Her teacher speaks as a parent does to young children, slowly and accurately about the names of the objects. For example, in her textbook, there are pictures of different kinds of animals. When the teacher talks about the animals, he teaches

⁶ A target language is the language which the students are learning in the foreign language class.

the name of the animals first, the place where the animals live, then the foods the animals like to eat, and so forth. It is just like how parents often describe the pictures in storybooks to children. The teacher teaches one or two pages of the storybook each day. Then the contents will be repeated the next day along with one or two new pages.

In Sandy's English class, many teaching materials are used, including a book for vocabulary, a book for phonics, a storybook, a conversation book, and a workbook for matching, coloring and easy mathematics. All vocabulary is taught in context first. The teacher usually makes one or two sentences for every new word. At the age of four years and six months old, (after she has visited the cram school for one year) Sandy has learned 500 English vocabulary words. This vocabulary can be employed in grammatically perfect, or near perfect sentences.

Every time Sandy sees the objects she has learned in English, she will say the names of the objects intuitively in English. For example, one day Sandy and I spontaneously went through pictures in a Chinese book. As soon as she saw the picture of a polar bear, she said loudly and happily in English, "polar bear". I think this is because she learned "polar bear" first in English, not in Chinese. Therefore, when she saw the picture of the animal, she said it automatically in English. That is the advantage of learning foreign languages in early childhood. In English class, Sandy learns new words through association. The teacher always utilizes pictures or concrete objects to teach new words, so students associate between the object and its English name. This teaching method also helps students memorize vocabulary easily. If Sandy had learned new words through translation, she would not have been able to speak English so quickly

when confronted with the picture of a polar bear.

Sandy also learns common knowledge about nature and the environment in English class. It is special because she learns this only through explanation in English, and only after her first year of learning English. She knows which animals live in which continent. Besides the English cram school, Sandy does not visit any other school or kindergarten. We (Sandy's parents and I) are sometimes so surprised that she can learn the knowledge so easily in English. It provides evidence that young children do not need their first language to help them understand in foreign language classes. They do not even have to learn the concept in their first language first, in order to help them understand in English class. In Dunn's book "Beginning English with young children", it stated: "Children find it easier if learning a new concept takes place in Language 1 rather than in Language 2" (Dunn 1990: 10). From the example of Sandy, I would say that it may be necessary for adults, adolescents, or older children to learn a new concept first through language 1. However, for young children, who begin to learn English before 3 or 4 years old, it is not necessary.

3. Learning English through playing:

Sandy also learns English through many different kinds of playing:

a. Play with the language (monologue)

How does Sandy practice her English? Sometimes when she plays with toys, or when she plays alone, she likes to talk to herself in English. I often pay attention to what she has said. She imitates her English teacher's pronunciation and intonation, and therefore, she speaks English without a Chinese accent.

According to some studies, children's monologues are not uncommon among children (Brown 1987: 31). Playing with the language "is very common in first language development and is a very natural stage in the first stages of foreign language learning too." (Scott/ Ytreberg 1993: 5). Children like to "play" with language just as they do with all objects and events around them (Brown 1987: 31). Monologue is a unique form of language practice by children. They use monologues to practice their first language. When they learn a foreign language at a young age, they also use the same method to practice their foreign language. Children's monologue practices help them in language acquisition.

Here I will also cite two reports about children's monologues:

"James Cummins reports that his daughter, a student in a French immersion program in Toronto, often utters what appears to be random French when playing alone after school." (Krashen 1989: 42). Another report is from Ruth Weir. She tape recorded her 28-month-old son's evening monologues and found that some of them resemble rehearsal of patterns. This phenomenon provides evidence that a certain kind of production (pattern practice) is helpful or even necessary for language acquisition (Krashen 1989: 41/42).

b. Role play

Besides monologue, role play is another game Sandy likes to use to practice her English. When she plays with her younger sister, she sometimes likes to play the role of a teacher to teach her 3.5 year old sister. She imitates her English teacher's activities and the words her English teacher says. I think this is also a good method to help her to learn English. Monologue and role play are both good methods for Sandy to reorganize and reproduce the sentences she has

learned.

4. Learning writing, accompanied with drawing

At cram school Sandy has only learned how to write the 26 letters of the English alphabet. She has not learned how to write words or sentences. At home, we do not ask her to write English, either. One day (about one year after she had attended the cram school) she began to be interested in writing. She took papers and wrote some words herself. Sometimes, she asked me how to write the words. In her writing, she often mixes capital letters and small letters together in a word, or in a sentence. Like other children, Sandy likes drawing. Sometimes, she likes to draw animals or other things. Afterwards, she will ask me how to write the names of the things she has drawn in English. After I spell the word for her, she will write it down under her drawing. Sometimes, she writes the word herself and then asks me whether it is right or not. There are times that she writes simple sentences by herself without my help, although they contain a few mistakes. These mistakes are that she often begins a sentence with a little letter instead of a capital letter, or she forgets a period at the end of the sentence. For Sandy, this is also one of the games she likes to play. I think she will improve in writing gradually through playing with drawing.

5. Learning to read by pointing to the words

Sandy can recognize some words because the teacher teaches them to read by pointing to each word and reading out loud at the same time. At home, she can also point to the words and read correctly. She can read but cannot spell words yet. Children learn their first language beginning with speaking, and then they learn reading and writing.

6. Read storybooks by heart easily

In the English cram school, Sandy has learned some storybooks, e.g.

“Goldilocks and the Three Bears”, “Billy Goats Gruff” and “The Enormous Turnip”. Nobody has ever asked Sandy to learn the texts of the storybooks by heart, and she has never intended to do so. We are very astonished that she has easily learned the texts of all three stories by heart, each time her teacher taught them. Although the texts in the books are easy and the stories are not long, it is not as easy for adults or adolescents to memorize them without any difficulty. Reading stories by heart will help Sandy speak correct sentences in the future. I think this is a strong advantage young children possess in learning languages.

7. Learning English strengthens her self-confidence and motivates her learning:

“If the teaching is appropriate children discover that learning another language is within their capacity, and this knowledge strengthens their motivation” (Lee, William R. 1988). This is a good description of the situation of my niece Sandy. She feels self-confident and is happy that she can speak English. This strengthens her motivation so she is willing to learn more English vocabulary and sentences.

8. The help of parents in doing review:

In order for children to learn English well, parental help is very important. Sandy’s teacher records what he has taught for about 7 minutes each day, and asks the children to listen to the tape at home. My sister (Sandy’s mother) and I, usually let Sandy listen to the tape many times everyday. We ask her to repeat

after her teacher. Because Sandy does not understand grammar, she does not know when she should put “s” after a verb. So, she sometimes makes mistakes in the verb in third person singular. When it occurs, we usually have her listen to the tape again and ask her to repeat the right sentence two or three times. After she memorizes the right sentences, she will say them automatically.

We have been satisfied with the results of Sandy’s English learning. I think good learning in foreign language depends not only on the English teacher, but also on the parents. If parents do not help their children do review at home, or at least let their children listen to the English tape at home, it is hard for the children to make progress. Sometimes when my sister and I were busy and could not help Sandy review, we noticed her English level diminished and she could not catch up with what the teacher had taught.

Concerning the importance of parents’ help in doing review, I would like to provide the example of Sandy’s former classmate in the cram school. Sandy’s classmate, Jenny, started to learn English at the cram school since she was 3 years old. Besides English, she also learns piano, mathematics and many other subjects at different cram schools. Jenny’s mother is always busy taking her from one cram school to another, and picking her up each day. Although the English teacher always told the children to listen to their tape recorder ten times each day, her mother had no time to help her listen to her English tape at home. After a few months of learning, the teacher found that Jenny could not keep up with other students in class and suggested she go to a class of a lower level. After one year of learning English, when Jenny was 4 years old, her English teacher found Jenny’s English level was still so weak that he suggested that she go to a

beginner class. I have met Jenny before, she is very cute and lovely. Her mother said that she does not learn well in piano class either. If she has never had time to practice at home, how could she make progress in English and in music? Parental help with regard to English review is an essential component in learning a foreign language. Besides English tapes, English videos are also helpful.

I would like to reiterate the advantages of learning foreign languages at a young age. Young children can learn a foreign language directly with the language they are learning. When they speak, they do not have to translate what they want to say from their first language to the foreign language. Sandy speaks Chinese and Taiwanese. Both Chinese and Taiwanese are her first languages. She speaks Chinese and Taiwanese automatically without noticing what language she is speaking. When a child learns a foreign language at a young age, he or she may have the chance to achieve the level much the same as Sandy's proficiency with Chinese and Taiwanese.

The example of my other niece Angela

Here I will take my other niece, Angela, as an example. Angela was born in March 1997. Although Angela and Sandy are sisters and visit the same English cram school, their situation is a little different.

When Angela was three years old, I used the teaching method of the Japanese educator Shichita to teach her English vocabulary. I made many flash cards with pictures, and showed her the cards very quickly one after another. In Shichita's book, he recommended this game and claimed it can help children by using the right hemisphere of the brain. Using the right hemisphere of the brain can help people strengthen their memory. Schichita recommended that the cards should

be shown very quickly, about one card per second. I showed the flash cards to my niece Angela quickly, one after another, and said the English name of the pictures at the same time. Angela usually liked to repeat my words. It took only a few minutes to play the game. Angela loved this game very much. It allowed her to learn 200 English vocabulary words before she went to the English cram school at age 3.5.

With regard to pronunciation, Sandy and Angela are very different. Sandy speaks with clear pronunciation in all the languages she has learned: Chinese, Taiwanese and English. Unlike her sister, Angela has a problem with the sounds <k> and <g> in all the languages she has learned. Therefore, she cannot pronounce the two sounds in English. My sister and I tried many times to correct her pronunciation. Sometimes she improves a little, but after a few days, she changes to the wrong pronunciation again.

Angela has visited an English cram school since October 2000, when she was 3.5 years old. The class is the same as Sandy's English class: three hours per day, from Monday through Friday. In class only English is used. There are only seven students in Angela's class. I observed the teaching in Angela's class during the first two days and found the teaching method was good. At the beginning, the teacher drew three faces on the white board which stood for happy, sad and angry. Then the teacher asked students, "How are you today?" Of course, most students did not know how to answer the question. The teacher used body language and facial expressions to help understanding. The students repeated the sentences: "I am happy.", "I am sad.", "I am angry." After that, the teacher asked students individually using the questions: "Are you happy?", "Are you sad?", "Are you angry?" At last, it seemed that every student understood the meaning because

each time the teacher asked one student “Are you happy?”, the student answered “yes” loudly and excitedly. When the teacher asked the other two questions, the students just answered “no”.

At the beginning, the teacher taught very slowly. The students only learned four vocabulary words the first day with many games and songs. For songs, the teacher read the texts sentence by sentence and employed body language at the beginning. The students repeated after the teacher. Following that they began to sing.

Since the students were beginners, the teacher asked “What is your name?” The students did not understand the meaning and just repeated the question to the teacher. The teacher told the students how to answer and let the students repeat. After many attempts, the students gradually understood how they should answer the question.

The atmosphere in the class was very joyful. The teacher used many different games to allow students to practice how to say the words correctly. For every game, each student had the chance to practice individually at least once. With many games per day, the students have many chances to practice individually.

Children like to listen to stories, and many parents read storybooks to children. In Angela’s class, the teacher also reads storybooks to the children. Although the students could not understand English yet, they did not feel bored because the storybooks had colorful pictures. In Krashen’s book, he insisted on the importance of providing comprehensible input to students at the early stage.

During the first two days of Angela's English class, the input of the teacher was not comprehensible for the children yet. But, if the input is repeated each day, (particularly because young children are talented in learning languages) the input will become comprehensible for them after a short period of time.

With the examples of my nieces, I agree with the theory that young children can learn a foreign language more easily than adults. They do not have pressure and they have enthusiasm for learning. I also agree that for kindergarten children, they should learn a foreign language through the target language. Moreover, I believe young children can memorize vocabulary words easier than elementary school children. I have taught elementary school children English for a few years. From my experience, I know that many elementary school students find it is difficult to memorize English vocabulary words. They usually have to spend more time memorizing English vocabulary words than kindergarten children. They also forget the vocabulary words sooner than kindergarten children. In addition, the elementary school children have to learn other subjects besides English. That means they have less time for English than preschool children. Therefore, it is better to start learning a foreign language early.

3. Foreign (Second) language acquisition theory and foreign (second) language teaching

In this chapter, I would like to discuss how young children learn a foreign language and how to teach them foreign languages. First of all, I will use Krashen's theory to explain how foreign languages are learned. Knowing how young children learn foreign languages can help English teachers understand what should be concentrated upon in the classroom. Utilization of this knowledge will enhance the effectiveness of the students' learning.

In this chapter, I will introduce the theory first. Then I will discuss how the theory can be used in Taiwan's kindergartens. Next, I will discuss why it is better to teach a foreign language by using a target language (teaching English using only English in class). After that, I will describe the advantages of teaching foreign languages using the similar way in which first languages are learned. Finally, I will sum up some principles of teaching kindergarten children according to their characteristics.

3.1 Krashen's five hypotheses

According to Krashen, the theory of second-language learning consists of five basic hypotheses:

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Krashen (1981: 37) suggested that adults have two independent but interrelated ways of gaining ability in second languages: acquisition and learning. The

difference between acquisition and learning is that learning takes place consciously, while acquisition takes place unconsciously (Dunn 1990: 3).

Where “rules” and “grammar” are concerned, they refer to learning. When we are learning, we know we are learning. However, for acquisition, the acquirer is not always aware of the acquisition or its results while it is happening (Krashen 1989: 8). “Acquisition takes place subconsciously in situations where speakers communicate naturally (Dunn 1990: 3)”.

In acquisition, speakers are concerned less with correct usage and form and pay more attention to using language to convey meaning. For acquirers, it is not necessary to learn rules of usage because they want to communicate through language rather than analyze it. On the contrary, in learning, error detection and correction are central. According to Krashen’s opinion, the good language learner is an acquirer. Young children are acquirers.

Acquisition is essential to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language. It is now considered to have a more central role than learning does in second language performance. The main reason for this is that conscious learning has only a function in adult language performance, and that is as a Monitor. However, monitoring one’s language usage is difficult because we need time to think about correctness and it can disrupt performance. Therefore, “when we focus on form while speaking, we produce less information, and we slow down.” (Krashen 1992: 3). From that, we understand that fluency and accuracy in second language performance comes unconsciously from what a learner has acquired in interpersonal communication, not from learning (Krashen 1989: 8).

Adolescents and adults learn foreign languages by conscious analysis. However, this weakens their acquisition ability (Dunn1990: 7,8).

According to Krashen, “language teaching has quite different effects on acquisition and on learning” (Krashen 1988: 26). If language teaching emphasizes explanations of rules and correction of errors, the teaching is directed at learning and not acquisition. This method of language teaching does little to increase students’ competence in communication.

2. The natural order hypothesis

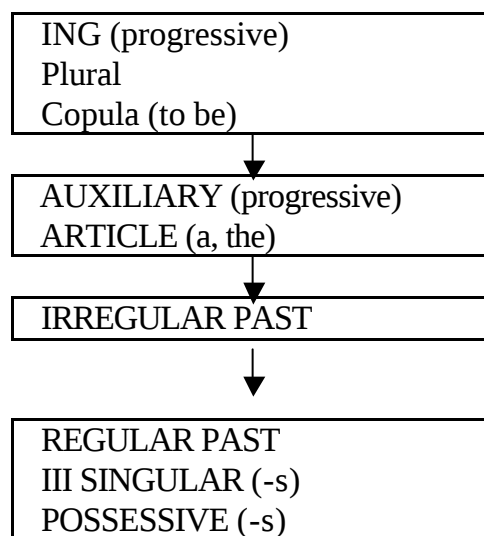
According to Krashen, grammatical structures are acquired in predictable order. While certain structures tend to be acquired early, other structures tend to be acquired late.

Krashen believes that there is a natural order for the acquisition of English morphology for children acquiring English as a first language. For example, the progressive tense with –ing, as in *I am going to school*, and the plural –s, as in *two balls*, belong to the morphemes, which children acquire early. The third person singular morpheme–s, as in *He likes cookies*, belongs to the late acquired morpheme.

There also exists a natural order for grammatical morphemes for children acquiring English as a second language. Even adults show a natural order of grammatical morphemes. Although the order of acquisition for a second

language is not exactly the same as the order of acquisition for a first language, there are some similarities. The average order of child and adult second language acquisition from Krashen is as follows:

Average Order of Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes for English as a Second Language (Children and Adults) (Krashen 1988: 29)



I agree with Krashen that a natural order exists in second language learning.

What I do not agree with is his use of this hypothesis in second language teaching. According to Krashen, it is unnecessary to correct students' deletion of –s in third person singular speech in early learning stages because it is acquired in a later stage. Krashen claims:

“By allowing student errors to occur without undue emphasis on error correction, the Natural Approach teacher allows the natural order to take its course. There is no expectation that students will perform late acquired items correctly in early stages of second language acquisition. A teacher of English as a second language, for example, will not expect

full correctness for the third person singular –s for verbs (a very late acquired item) in their students’ speech, (...)” (Krashen 1988: 59).

In another book, Krashen contends:”(...) we cannot change the natural order by explanations, drills and exercises. A teacher can drill the third person singular for weeks, but as the wine commercial says, it will not be acquired until its time has come” (Krashen 1992: 2).

I do not agree with Krashen’s opinion. I believe English teachers should correct students’ mistakes in early stages. In the beginning, it may seem useless to correct them, because they will repeat the mistakes. However, if corrected, they will improve gradually. If language learners have memorized key sentences using the correct third person singular form, they should be able to incorporate that in formulating their own sentences. Therefore, I believe that even in early stages, the English teacher should correct students’ mistakes in third person singular. On the contrary, if English teachers do not correct the learners’ mistake in early stages, the learners will become accustomed to speaking incorrectly. When they speak, they automatically omit –s from the third person singular. Furthermore it will be harder for them to correct their speaking mistakes in the future.

3. The Monitor Hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis tries to explain how acquisition and learning are used. According to Krashen, conscious learning has only one function: as a Monitor. Monitor “acts as a sort of editor that is consciously controlled and makes changes in the form of utterances produced by acquisition” (McLaughlin 1987:

25). After we produce utterances in a second language using the acquired system, we sometimes inspect it and use our learned system to make corrections. This can happen before or after we actually speak or write (Krashen 1988: 30 / Krashen 1992: 3).

Monitor use can be helpful in writing. However, it has its limitations in speaking because in order to use this system successfully, three conditions are required:

- The performer has to have enough time to think about rules.
- The performer has to be focused on form.
- The performer has to know the rule.

In monitor use, we need time to think about the rules, so it can lead to difficulties like a hesitant style of talking.

Krashen hypothesized that our fluency in production comes from what we have acquired in natural communicative situations. The rules we learn in class serve only to check and make repairs on the output of the acquired system. Therefore, for students, the monitor is most helpful when doing written work or in preparing speeches. “They are not expected to apply rules consciously in the communicative activities of the classroom” (Krashen 1988: 59).

4. The input hypothesis

If acquisition can really help us in second language performance, then we should think about: “how do we acquire?” The Input Hypothesis tries to answer this question.

According to Krashen, we acquire when we understand messages or obtain comprehensible input. The Input Hypothesis can be explained as: “We acquire a new rule by understanding messages that contain this new rule.” (Krashen 1989: 9) For example, we acquire new grammatical rules by understanding messages that contain these new rules. The Input Hypothesis can also be explained another way: If the learner’s current stage of development is i , “he or she can proceed to the next structure $i + 1$ by understanding input that contains $i + 1$.” (Krashen 1989: 39).

“This Input Hypothesis explains why pictures and other realia are so valuable to the beginning language teacher; they provide context, background information, that helps make input comprehensible.” (Krashen 1989: 9) Besides realia and pictures, games, physical movements and discussion of interesting topics are activities, which can provide comprehensible input at the beginning level.

The Input Hypothesis claims that listening to English radio or tape might help learners acquire more English, if it is comprehensible. Krashen’s view states that we acquire language by listening or reading for meaning, but not by practicing speaking. According to Krashen, speaking is a result of acquisition, not a cause. Krashen predicates that speaking shows language competence (Krashen 1989: 39). In Krashen’s opinion, having conversations with other people can only help indirectly because other people answer your questions, which invites comprehensible input.

I feel Krashen’s theory about “speaking Spanish to yourself as you drive to work

in the morning will not help you acquire more Spanish!” , is weak (Krashen 1989: 8). Two examples that express my opinion are: An English teacher of a famous English teaching program on radio in Taiwan, Shih-Hsiung Lai, said that when he was in school, he often had to listen to boring speeches in Chinese every week. He used this as an opportunity to practice his translation skills, translating the spoken Chinese into English in his mind. I am of the opinion that when a learner speaks to himself in this manner, he practices the words and sentences he has learned. When he notices that he does not know how to say some words or sentences, he may look up those words in dictionaries or other reference books. This is another method for learning foreign languages.

Another example is my niece Sandy. At the age of 4.5, she likes to talk to herself. She imitates her English teacher’s activity and speech. I think this helps her to review the sentences she has learned.

Krashen also claims that this input hypothesis explains why children often go through a silent period for a few months before they begin to speak a new language. During the silent period they use routine and pattern sentences because they have not yet built up enough speaking competence through comprehensible input. Children are building competence in the second language during the silent period. When they begin to speak, they have built up competence and are beginning to show it off (Krashen 1989: 9).

Krashen insisted that comprehensible input is the essential ingredient in language acquisition. For Krashen, the best input for acquisition is not grammatically sequenced. He insists that the comprehensible input is “far more

efficient than deliberate grammatical sequencing for the development of grammatical accuracy.” (Krashen 1989: 10). The reason for this is, the high-quality comprehensible input automatically contains all the appropriate structures and review for the acquirer. Therefore, deliberately programmed grammar is not necessary (Krashen 1989: 10). “When communication is successful, when the input is understood and supplied in quality, quantity, and variety, $i + 1$ will be provided automatically and recycled in optimum quantity for language acquisition and recycled in optimum quantity for language acquisition.” (Krashen 1989: 39).

Studies of Canadian immersion programs indicate that when children are taught subject matter in the second language in a comprehensible way, they make progress in both second language acquisition and subject matter knowledge. In addition, plays, films, and interaction with native speakers are also ways to obtain comprehensible input outside of the classroom (Krashen 1989: 26).

How can we make input more comprehensible?

Until now we have been talking about what the comprehensible input is and about its advantages, but how does one make input more comprehensible?

Krashen suggests that one method is to use simplified language, and a second method is to use the help of the first language (Krashen 1988: 34 /1989: 28, 50).

I will describe these two methods and criticize the second method.

To simplify the language and use more common vocabulary with shorter, less-complex sentences is the most frequently used technique for comprehensible input. “Caretaker speech”, “foreigner talk” and “teacher talk” all

belong to simplified languages, which provide good evidence for the input hypothesis.

Many researchers (Bellugi and Brown 1964 / Lade 1975 / Drach 1969) found that “the speech addressed to children was carefully grammatical and lacked the usual hesitations and false starts common in adult-to-adult speech” (cited from Brown 1987: 32). It is said that children learn faster with simplified language than without it. The caretaker speech has the following properties:

1. “Caretaker speech” is composed of shorter sentences and it is more intelligible (Krashen 1985: 125). Caretakers use simplified language not because they want to teach children a language, but for the purpose of communication with children or, in order to control their behavior.
2. As the child grows in linguistic maturity, caretaker speech tends to be more complex.
3. Caretakers change their words in order to let children understand. It is the best language course for children. Moreover, caretakers often give children $i+1$ input.

Similar to caretaker speech is “foreigner talk”. “Foreigner talk” refers to the modified language which native speakers speak to non-native speakers, in order to let them understand. The modifications include slowing down, using easier words, repeating and restating. “Foreigner talk” can be used in foreign language classrooms as “teacher talk” to help students understand the input, especially in the beginning levels. Teacher talk is used for classroom management and explanation, when the class is taught in a target language. It has the same

function as “caretaker speech”; both are used for the purpose of communication (Chang, Hsiang-chin 1999 / Krashen 1988: 34). It is said that teacher-talk “may be useful for attaining low-intermediate levels of competence, and that foreigner-talk may provide a bridge to high intermediate and advanced levels of competence” (Krashen 1985: 123)

From my personal experience of learning German, I will say “foreigner talk” is helpful for non-native speakers. Sometimes, when I speak with more than two native speakers of German and they speak very quickly and use colloquial language, I can hardly understand them. At that time, if one of them can explain the sentences or words which I do not understand, I am able to understand and therefore, can continue to join in the conversation.

I also think that “teacher talk” is helpful for language beginners in language courses, particularly when the teacher is a native speaker. Many foreign students in Germany have the experience that they cannot understand what people say on the radio or television, but they understand what the teacher says in language class. That is because the language teacher uses “teacher talk” to aid students’ comprehension in class. If the teacher cannot use simplified language, the input in class will be less comprehensible for the language beginners.

For comprehensible input, I agree with Krashen’s method of utilizing simplified language, but I do not entirely agree with his method of using the first language to assist in learning a second one. Krashen (1989: 51) claims that allowing students to respond in the first language in early stages can facilitate communication and increase comprehensible input. Moreover, he also claims

that solid subject matter teaching in the first language can help make English input comprehensible. He suggests that providing background information with a student's first language can help a great deal in making input comprehensible and increase the rate of second language acquisition (Krashen 1989: 28). I think the use of a first language to provide comprehensible input might be necessary for adult and adolescent learners, but not for kindergarten children.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter with the example of my niece Sandy, I believe that in the English classes for kindergarten children it is not necessary to use first language to aid input comprehension. For kindergarten children, they have not yet acquired much knowledge with their first language. They are still at the knowledge acquisition stage in learning their first language. Therefore, English teachers do not have to use the student's first language to explain a concept, because its use will not always be helpful to the students. For kindergarten children, it is better to use visual aids, such as real objects, pictures and models, or the method of Total Physical Response (TPR) for attaining comprehensible input.

Here I will give an example using my niece Sandy. In Sandy's English cram school, they will occasionally teach children something about American festivals. One day, a few days before Halloween, Sandy came back from the English cram school and told us that her English teacher showed her a "skeleton". She told us with the sentence in Chinese, except the word "skeleton" in English. At that time Sandy was 4.5 years old. My sister and I knew that we had never taught her that word in Chinese or in Taiwanese. We wondered how she could understand what "skeleton" is in English. Then we realized that the English

teacher had made a model of a skeleton and showed it to the students in a humorous way. The model provided comprehensible input for the children. If the English teacher could speak Chinese and had explained it in Chinese, I am sure most children in the class would not have understood. Moreover, using the first language to explain, the new word would not have impressed children as much as the model or real object did.

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Although comprehensible input is necessary, it is not sufficient for second language acquisition because “input may be understood by the acquirer, but this does not mean that this input will reach the Language Acquisition Device.”

(Krashen 1989: 10) The Language Acquisition Device refers to the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition. Dulay and Burt (1977) suggested that there is an Affective Filter, which can prevent input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device. High filter, e.g. low motivation, high student anxiety and low student self-esteem, can prevent input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device. On the contrary, we acquire when messages are interesting and comprehensible and when we obtain it in a low-anxiety situation (Krashen 1989: 10).

Because of “Affective Filter”, it can happen that two students receive the same comprehensible input, yet one makes progress, while the other does not. People who are motivated and who have a positive self-image possess a lower filter and will consequently obtain more input. Lowering or weakening the mental block (Affective Filter) is a crucial aspect of language teaching. In terms of this theory, for successful language acquisition, acquirers must have self-confidence, e.g.

assume that they will be successful, and they must consider themselves to be potential users of that language.

Krashen hypothesized that people's affective filter increases in strength around puberty, because at puberty adolescents are often self-centered and preoccupied with their own appearance and behavior. Adolescents make the error of thinking that other people are concerned with their behavior. During adolescence, the filter gains in strength and the necessary input is often blocked, therefore their ability to acquire is less available. On the contrary, young children have low affective filters and have less input blocks. That helps explain why young children learn second languages better than adolescents in the long run (Krashen 1988: 47 / 1992: 7).

In the Affective Filter Hypothesis, Krashen insists that students should not be forced to produce early speech. He believes through listening and reading, spoken fluency will emerge on its own. He claims that when learners have to speak too early, first language interference occurs because they try to think in their first language. The Affective Filter Hypothesis also claims that errors of students are not corrected directly, but in many cases the correct version is included in the teacher's response to the student. Krashen believes that if English teachers do not force students to have early speech production and do not insist on high levels of accuracy in early stages, it will reduce anxiety in the classroom and lower students' affective filter. (Krashen 1989: 29 / Krashen 1988: 56 / 59).

I agree with Krashen that in the English classroom the teacher should lower the affective filter, but I do not agree with him on all points. First, concerning the

correction of errors. If, through response, the teacher can indirectly correct students' errors, it is favorable. But, if the teacher cannot do that, I think it is better that the teacher correct the errors directly. I have learned German, English, French and Japanese. From my experience of learning foreign languages and from my experience of teaching foreign languages to children and adults, I believe that there are distinct advantages if the teacher corrects errors directly. I believe that most students will not feel uncomfortable if their language teacher corrects their speech errors in class. If the teacher does not correct the students' errors in the early stages, the students will not be aware of the correct sentence structure and will continue to repeat the incorrect one. If the students have said sentences incorrectly or mispronounced words a few times, they will grow accustomed to the incorrect sentences or the mispronunciations and use them automatically. It will take them more time to make corrections in the future.

Secondly, I do not agree with the point that when learners have to speak too early, first language interference occurs. This may be true for adult learners or for a person who begins to learn the foreign language in late childhood. For children younger than 6 years old, learning the foreign language directly through the target language, they do not have to think in their first language when they speak. Since they think directly in the target language, first language interference will not occur for them.

Thirdly, Krashen believes that learners would benefit from delaying production until speech "emerges". According to his opinion, learners need not say anything in class during the silent period until they feel ready to do so. However, the aspect about the delay of oral production until speech 'emerges' has

shortcomings, especially in Taiwan. In Taiwan, most students do not like to say anything in class or to answer a teacher's question. If the English teacher wants to wait until students feel ready for their speech to emerge, he/she can hardly expect that students will show that they are ready to say something in class.

3.2 How can Krashen's theory be used in English classes in kindergartens in Taiwan?

Although the five hypotheses still have weak points and have been criticized (Gregg 1984, McLaughlin 1978b / 1987), some of them are helpful for language teaching. The theories which give me the inspiration that they can be used in Taiwan's kindergarten English classes are outlined in the following points.

1. English teaching and learning with comprehensible input

The theory of comprehensible input is very important in language teaching. Krashen claims that the learners must have sufficient comprehensible input before they can communicate in a second language. I think the sufficient comprehensible input is especially important for kindergarten children. But, how can sufficient comprehensible input be provided to kindergarten children in the classroom? First of all, I think the English classes must be taught in English, without any Chinese speaking, although Krashen claims that using a child's first language will make input more comprehensible. I believe that in order to give young children sufficient input, the English classes should be taught in English. If English teachers can use many kinds of teaching aids, gestures and body language, their input can be comprehensible, even without the help of a students' first language.

On average, the class period for English classes in Taiwan's kindergartens is very short. Therefore, the whole class must be taught in English. Otherwise, there will only be limited comprehensible input available. I will discuss the importance of using a target language in foreign language courses in the next section.

Secondly, in order to let children have sufficient comprehensible input, other subjects, such as mathematics, science and art, should be taught in English. The advantage is not only that it provides more vocabulary, but it also provides more of a chance for natural conversation. An English class alone does not often build much vocabulary in the areas of geography and science. If students can learn subject matter in English, they can adapt it to vocabulary in other subject matter. It helps children communicate better in the future and in achieving on an academic level. There are already some kindergartens in Taiwan which teach many subjects in English, and it is estimated that in the near future it will become more of a trend.

My third point is that tape and video are excellent sources of comprehensible input. They help children to receive comprehensible input outside the English course in kindergarten and at home, especially in countries like Taiwan where English is a foreign language. Almost all language tapes on the market are spoken by native English teachers, therefore they are especially valuable for kindergarten children if their English teachers are nonnative speakers (Krashen 1989: 20). In kindergartens, the children have a sleep time every afternoon. The kindergarten teacher can choose a short time every day, e.g. lunch time, sleep time or other free time, to let the children listen to English tapes. It can also be a review time for the English class everyday.

Besides tapes, kindergartens should also offer their children written materials, e.g. textbooks, in order to supply background text and visuals to help make the aural input comprehensible (Krashen 1989: 21). Textbooks are also helpful for

parents at home to help their children review.

Fourth, in order to give children comprehensible input, visual aids are useful in English class, e.g. pictures, flash cards, real objects, models and video films.

2. Use caretaker speech / teacher talk

As mentioned previously, simplified language such as caretaker speech and teacher talk can help children and language beginners to understand better. In kindergarten English classes, the English teachers can use Total Physical Response and use “teacher talk” to help with explanations.

Moreover, the pronunciation of the English teacher must be clear. For new words, the English teacher must repeat each word several times patiently, just like parents or caretakers as they talk to their young children.

3. Lowering the Affective Filter

Lowering or weakening the affective filter is an important part of language teaching. I think an English teacher can lower students’ affective filter in class by showing sympathy to his or her pupils, providing interesting teaching, treating all his or her students the same (whether they are good or bad in English) and inspiring their confidence (Harmer 1998 :6). Moreover, children love to be praised and to be appreciated by the teacher. In kindergarten, if the English teachers can create a good rapport with their pupils, it can lower the students’ affective filter, too.

3.3 Teaching L2 using target language (Teaching English using only English in class)

Opinions differ about whether it is better to use the target language to teach L2 (language two), or whether it is necessary to use the students' first language to help in explanation. There are different teaching methods, such as the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method, which insist on using the target language to teach L2. However, there are teaching methods, e.g. the Grammar-Translation Approach, for which it is necessary to use a students' first language to explain certain language concepts.

I think it depends on the age of the students to decide whether L1 (language one) should be used in foreign language teaching. For English classes in Taiwan's kindergartens, I believe it is better to only use English in class. There are many advantages in doing so:

1. If L2 is taught through L2, more language areas in the brain will develop:

According to neurological research, different languages spoken by the same person may use different areas of the brain. William and Ojemann explain that "strokes damaging language areas in bilingual patients most commonly impair both languages equally or in proportion to how well they were spoken before the damage" (William / Ojemann 1980, chapter 3). For a stroke-damaged patient, his or her native tongue or the language in which he or she was most fluent, is most likely to recover first, with an exception. After a stroke, a grandmother spoke only Croatian, which she spoke for a few years as an adolescent. However, at the time she had the stroke, no one else in the family spoke Croatian (William /

Ojemann 1980, chapter 3).

When we learn one language, a language area will develop in the brain. When we learn two languages at the same time, two language areas will develop.

Consequently, a child who learns more than 2 languages at the same time will develop more language areas than the child who only learns one language.

If a child learns English through Chinese, then only the Chinese language area of the brain will develop. If he or she learns English using only English, then the English language area of the brain will develop. From that, we know if a child learns English through English, more language areas in the brain will develop (Kung 1997:8).

2. To learn L2 through L2 will prevent interference of word-pair:

If we learn a foreign language through translation, no new language area in our brain will be developed. Instead, a word-pair will be developed in our brain. For example, if we tell a Chinese child “狗” which means “dog” in English, then the word “dog” will not develop in the English language area of the brain. Instead, there will be a word-pair, “狗-dog”, in the Chinese language area of the brain.

If we learn English through translation, when we hear an English word or an English sentence, we will look for the word-pair in our Chinese language area of the brain first, and then translate the English word or sentence into Chinese. In all likelihood, when we want to say something in English, we will look for the word-pair in our Chinese language area of the brain first, and then translate it into English before we speak. This takes time. That is why many people in

Taiwan, after they have learned English for many years, have a problem listening to and speaking English. When they listen to or speak English, their brain cannot work quickly enough to speak or to understand the input. However, if one learns English directly through English, he or she may think directly in English without the need of translation. He or she may have less difficulty communicating with other people in English than those who learn through translation (Kung 1997: 8).

3. Provides the opportunities of listening and speaking in L2

“That is to say that although some children will learn better if they are given the opportunity to speak in the language, others will learn just as well if they spend most of their time listening” (Bloor 1991: 130). Teaching a foreign language using only the target language gives children both the opportunities of listening and speaking in that language.

There are some English teachers, Ting (Ting 1998: 49) for example, who argue that without using Chinese to explain, students cannot understand the exact meaning of what they are learning. This is particularly true when teaching grammar. For elementary school children, adolescents and adults, sometimes it is necessary to explain in Chinese. However, for kindergarten children, I believe that teaching English using only English is optimal. One of the reasons this is preferable is that kindergarten children have the ability to learn languages with greater ease than older students. They learn foreign languages directly through target languages and understand them well. Another reason instruction in the target language is an asset is that it is not necessary to teach kindergarten children grammar because they learn their second language much like their first language, through repetition and correction. Therefore, there is no need to use

Chinese during English classes in kindergarten.

The example of learning English using only English with success for kindergarten children was described in chapter two using the example of my nieces. On the contrary, for adults or adolescents it is sometimes better to use Chinese. I will use myself as an example. I started to learn English when I was in junior high school (about 13 years old). Three years later, I went to a junior college where English classes were taught only in English. At that time my English was extremely poor. It was an uncomfortable and stressful time for me because I could not really understand what the teachers said in class. It took me a while until I could understand in class. Therefore, for adolescents it is better to explain using a student's first language in order to handle difficult concepts.

I think there are differences between teaching kindergarten children and teaching adolescents. An English teacher should consider the age of their students and choose the most appropriate teaching methods for their students.

For teaching English using only English, one very important point is that the English teachers must have good language competence. They must have good pronunciation and speak English correctly. Otherwise, students will often listen to the incorrect sentences and it will have a negative influence on students.

The main purpose of teaching English is that students will be able to use the language in real situations. It is important that we introduce realistic practice to children at an early age. "The younger the learners, the more they will benefit from the experience of hearing the target language in appropriate situations"

(Bloor 1991: 129). Therefore, it is better to use the target language to teach young children at the beginning of foreign language learning. Moreover, if other subjects are also taught in English, students have more opportunities to hear the target language in different situations.

3.4 Teaching foreign languages using the similar way in which first languages are learned

As mentioned in chapter two, research suggests that starting foreign language learning from early childhood provides an optimal period for learning languages. Moreover, it has been found that for young children, there are many things in common between learning their first language and learning a second. “It has been assumed that if children begin a foreign or a second language at a young enough age, they will acquire it in much the same way as their first language” (Johnstone 1994: 33). Since children learn their first language with speed and competence, John Tough suggested that if the process of learning a first language can be better understood “it should be possible to design experiences through which children learn a second language in much the same way as they learn their first language.” (Tough 1991: 213)

Research indicates that parents generally speak a little more slowly, articulate carefully, and use gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice to talk to children. This aids children’s understanding and encourages them to respond. Young children who are learning a foreign language in school will need support of a similar kind. Using this method, children can become familiar with the sounds, rhymes and stresses of a second language.

In the early stages, parents tend to repeat single words clearly and often follow up by using those same words in simple sentences before children begin to produce utterances themselves (Tough 1991: 225). For example:

“C: (smiles)

M: Oh what a nice little smile!

Yes, isn’t that nice?

There.

There’s a nice little smile.” (Snow 1977: 12, cited from Yang 1999: 206)

As a child begins to talk, he uses single words, followed by two or more words, and telegraphic utterances. Parents are always very patient and try to find out what their children are trying to express. They complete the child’s telegraphic phrase and provide a well-formed phrase with the same meaning, “so that children frequently hear their telegraphic phrases expanded to a well-formed version” (Tough 1991: 226). For example:

“C: Fan [looking at the electric fan]

M: Hm?

C: Fan.

M: Bathroom?

C: Fan.

M: Fan! Yeah.

C: Cool!

M: Cool, yeah. Fan makes you cool” (Scollen 1974, cited from Yang 1999: 207).

If a child incorrectly names an object or action, parents will quickly give the appropriate name. Parents often do not correct children’s language mistakes directly, but give the correct version in their response. For example:

“C: [points] Doggie.

M: No, that’s a HORSIE.

C: [points to picture] Bird house.

M: Yes, the bird’s sitting on a NEST” (Brown & Hanlon 1970, cited from Yang 1999: 207).

Parents teach children their first language with patience and love. They also provide model sentences in different situations for their children to hear. Parents often teach their children their first language in a joyful atmosphere. They encourage children to talk, are prepared to listen, and patiently give children time to complete what they want to say. If the environment that supports children’s development of learning foreign languages can be created in school by using the similar way that parents talk to young children in learning their first language, the teaching will be effective for young children (Tough 1991: 226).

Moreover, parents usually intuitively recognize when their children are ready to take new steps. The teacher should be able to judge when each child is ready to take another step forward and to encourage further attempts (Tough 1991: 221).

Young children have potential for learning a language, but “this potential can only come into play if they are immersed in experiences of the language being used.” (Tough 1991: 220) In other words, children learn their second language better when they can see and hear the second language being used, in the same manner in which they acquire their first language. For kindergartens, it is important to provide a second language rich environment. How can this be

accomplished in kindergartens? One way to do this would be to teach other classes in English. In addition, teachers can conduct and promote simple conversations as they care for children.

3.5 Principles of teaching kindergarten children according to their characteristics

If teachers are familiar with the characteristics of children, they will be able to select and utilize appropriate and effective methods in their teaching.

In this section, I will take a look at the characteristics of young children between 3 and 6 years old. Then, I will discuss what should be concentrated upon in foreign language teaching according to young children's characteristics.

1. Words are not enough; objects and pictures are needed

Children of kindergarten age are still at "the concrete operational stage" proposed by Piaget. They cannot go beyond imagination if they have not experienced something. Children of this age learn best with concrete experiences. They need to know how to feel about something in order to learn it well (Curtain/Pesola 1994: 69). Therefore, the English teachers of kindergarten children cannot rely only on the spoken word. They need to have plenty of objects and pictures to help them in their teaching (Scott / Ytreberg 1993: 5).

In comparison with pictures, real objects are easier for young children to understand. Therefore, it is better that the English teachers bring real objects or models to class when they teach new words (Dunn 1990: 23). This is different when teaching elementary school children and teaching kindergarten children. For elementary school children, pictures and flash cards are enough in English classes. But for kindergarten children, concrete objects (real objects or props) are

better than pictures. If the English teacher cannot bring concrete objects to class and has to use pictures as substitution, it is better to bring pictures which are large.

2. Young children need to be praised

In the classroom, children need constant changes of activity, and they need to be appreciated by their teacher. Young children are enthusiastic and positive about learning. Children like to be praised by their teacher. This contributes to expressions of enthusiasm and feelings of success. However, if teachers label children as failures, then they believe it (Scott / Ytreberg 1993: 3). Therefore, English teachers should pay more attention to this need and provide more praise for their young students.

3. Young children love rhymes, chants, songs and stories

Young children have difficulty in sitting still. They always love to wriggle, to move and to touch objects. What can English teachers do to allow them to move around and still learn things in the classroom? The best way to accomplish this is to use some activities, such as rhymes, games and songs, providing children the opportunities to move around within the classroom. The teacher can teach rhymes with activities like jumping or dancing and can choose games requiring physical activity. If the activity is right for the children and can let them have fun, even if they are wriggling, they will still be listening and involved (Dunn 1990: 15).

Rhymes and chants are useful in other areas of learning as well. Children love rhymes and chants and like to repeat them again and again. They can memorize

rhymes and chants well. Chants and rhymes help children in foreign language learning by helping them remember words and sentences.

When it comes to telling stories in the English classroom, Scott and Ytreberg (1993: 21) give some suggestions: "...when we are talking and the children are listening, it's important to say things clearly, and to repeat them. When you are telling a story, for example, you don't have to tell it from beginning to end without breaks. You can re-tell it again and again as you go along." In fact, many stories are full of repetition in themselves. It helps children remember the words and sentences (Scott and Ytreberg 1993: 97).

4. Variety in the classroom

We usually say that young children have short attention spans. Brown (1994: 92) argues that if we put children in front of a TV with a favorite cartoon, they will sit riveted for a long period of time. This means if the lesson is interesting, the children may maintain their concentration and focus for the whole lesson. If the English teacher can make the lesson interesting, lively and fun, the children may love the English lesson. What can English teachers do to help children love their lessons? English teachers should conduct a lesson full of variety and changes of activity. Scott / Ytreberg (1993: 5) suggest some varieties in the classroom: "variety of activity, variety of pace, variety of organization, variety of voice".

When children have lost their interest in an activity, they will also lose their concentration, and then little or no learning takes place. Therefore, it is better to change an activity before children lose interest and get bored. How often should an activity be changed? Schichita (2000c: 238) suggests that the English teachers

should change their activities every 5 minutes. If the same activity lasts 10 or 15 minutes, young children will lose their concentration. Teachers of young learners should change activities often to make the classroom atmosphere more fun.

5. Kindergarten children love to laugh

One foreign English teacher wrote in my questionnaire regarding the characteristics of children and how to teach them according to their characteristics:

“First, the children have to get to know you and not to be afraid of looking at you. Then you speak with your body making funny gestures about the material you are teaching: children love to laugh.”

These characteristics of kindergarten children are well described. For elementary school students, if teachers behave like that, they will not laugh, but kindergarten children love laughing. Kindergarten English teachers should often think about what young children like and what they think about, in order to enhance young children's enjoyment of English class.

6. Use Gestalt language in the initial stage of English classes

First language acquisition can be identified on one hand as Gestalt and on the other hand as analytic or creative. While analytic or creative language develops word by word (e.g. a dog, a cat), Gestalt stresses learning by wholes. Gestalt includes prefabricated routines or patterns, which are memorized as whole utterances, e.g. rhymes, and sentences such as How are you? What are you doing? Gestalt language is memorized by imitation. Because of children's Language 1

experience, they are better able to imitate and memorize Gestalt language than creative language. “Research indicates that for many Language 2 learners, especially children, Gestalt speech (prefabricated language) serves as a short cut to allow social interaction and interpersonal communication with a minimum of competence.” (Dunn 1990: 5). Therefore, in the initial stages of learning, the English teacher should teach children more rhymes and pattern sentences.

At the beginning of learning a second language, Gestalt language (prefabricated language) is used more frequently. However, creative language (analytic language) is developed gradually and eventually becomes dominant, when learners attempt to express specific and individual ideas (Dunn 1990: 5).

Since children have a great capacity to imitate and memorize long utterances when they learn their first language, they can also do it well when learning another language. When children have memorized some prefabricated language, they feel they can speak “a lot of English”. Once they know how to transfer language, they have the ability to use the little language they know in different situations for maximum communication. Through communicating with others, children can acquire more language and gradually speak more fluently. If children are exposed to planned opportunities to acquire prefabricated language, their second language acquisition will be quicker (Dunn 1990: 5).

In the foreign language classroom it is preferable to give children the linguistic environment in which to learn prefabricated patterns and routines. This gives children an opportunity to predict the meaning of the language used, since much of it will be the same. With practice and regular repetition of the same

prefabricated language, children may quickly understand situations and memorize the language involved (Dunn 1990: 5).

7. English lessons should be well planned in advance

As mentioned above, young children are full of energy, therefore the activity in English class must be changed often. If English teachers don't plan their work in advance, they will not have time to think during the class.

Young children have enthusiasm for learning. If the English teacher can keep children's enthusiasm by presenting well planned lessons, the children will be interested in English, make progress, and find they are good at speaking English. Through good preparation, the children can get maximum enjoyment and learning out of the lesson. English teachers should plan their lessons well in advance to offer children an interesting lesson with good content. A strong foundation in English language learning may foster a life-long interest in the English language for the children (Dunn 1990: 1).

4. Factors of successful English learning for children

There are many factors that influence a child's success in learning English.

These are: qualified English teachers, curriculum planning, teaching materials and teaching methods. Moreover, motivation and attitude of the parents are also factors for success in learning.

Planning a foreign language course for kindergarten children should take the following points into consideration: motivation, the qualifications of the teacher, size of the class, the length of the lesson, the structure of the course, methodology, and the circumstances in which the children are learning.

(Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 98)

4.1 Motivation

Motivation can be classified into two types: integrative and instrumental.

Integrative motivation is indicated when learners wish to integrate themselves into the culture of the second language group. If the learners believe that acquiring a second language is instrumental in furthering their educational or career goals, their motivation is referred to as instrumental (Brown 1987: 115/ Pan 1997: 16).

For kindergarten children in Taiwan, it seems that neither instrumental nor integrative motivation is a factor in enhancing their foreign language learning.

The motivation for learning a foreign language for kindergarten children may be very different from that of older learners, because young children do not usually ask to learn a foreign language. Where does their motivation come from?

Initially, their motivation comes from their parents who enroll them in the kindergarten English course. (Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 98) Therefore, during the learning of a second language, parental support and encouragement are also important. (Gardner/Lambert 1972: 133) The expectations and attitudes of parents in a society regarding the foreign language can also influence the results of children's learning. If society and parents have a positive attitude toward the foreign language, it gives children motivation to learn that language. On the contrary, if society and parents have a negative attitude toward the foreign language, it will decrease the interest in learning that language.

Second, the English learning results of a young beginner are to a large extent dependent on the teacher. The teacher can give children encouragement and praise to motivate them. The personality of the English teacher and the teacher's treatment of students also has an influence on young children's ability to learn a second language (Gardner/Lambert 1972: 133). Children often seek their teacher's approval. They want the teacher to notice them and appreciate what they are doing (Harmer 1998: 7). Whether or not the student likes the teacher may also affect their motivation. A teacher's positive attitude and behavior can motivate children's interest in learning English.

Praise by parents or teachers is important motivation for young children's foreign language learning because children want to be praised for their efforts. "If parents are interested in their children's achievements in English and show appreciation of their success, the children will be motivated" (Dunn 1990: 17). For example, my niece Sandy has listening homework every day. My sister and I

review the homework for her almost every day and often use words like “very good”, “good job” to praise her. The praise has its effect. She shows great interest in learning English.

Thirdly, “if the teaching is appropriate, children discover that learning another language is within their capacity, and this knowledge strengthens their motivation” (Lee, William R. (1988)). Children’s motivation “comes from the enjoyment and pleasure experienced in the learning situation.” (Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 98) If the class is boring, children will become unmotivated. A crucial aspect of language teaching is to raise students’ motivation with enjoyable teaching methods. Children have the ability to learn language through games and activities which they find joyful. How can a learning situation be joyful? This joyfulness can be found in English classes full of play. Fröhlich-Ward (1991) suggested that, “play combined with structured teaching so that the children are only aware of the play content and learn the foreign language almost without noticing.” (Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 99) Classroom atmosphere, teaching methodology, teaching content, teaching aids and teaching materials can also influence children’s motivation in learning English.

4.2 The qualification of kindergarten English teachers

What qualifications should a kindergarten English teacher have? First of all, English kindergarten teachers should have competence in English - including clear and accurate pronunciation. Secondly, English teachers should have the knowledge of second language learning processes and teaching methods (Reeves 1989). Thirdly, kindergarten English teachers should have experience working with young children or have been trained in teaching English to young children. They must know how to give children the encouragement and praise necessary to motivate them. English teachers have to understand children's development, needs, interests, and the children themselves (Pan 1997: 24). These qualifications are necessary for both Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers.

A study done by Denis Girard in 1970 tried to find out what qualities a teacher needs to help strengthen students' intrinsic motivation. In the research, a thousand children (from 12 to 17 years old) were asked to put a list of teacher qualities in order of preference (1 = most important, 10 = least important). The results are as follows and I believe that for kindergarten English teachers the order is similar:

- “1. He makes his course interesting.
2. He teaches good pronunciation.
3. He explains clearly.
4. He speaks good English.
5. He shows the same interest in all his students.
6. He makes all the students participate.

7. He shows great patience.
8. He insists on the spoken language.
9. He makes his pupils work.
10. He uses an audio-lingual method” (cited from Harmer 1998: 6).

The list highlights that the most appreciated quality of a teacher is his ability to make the course interesting. The second, third and fourth qualifications are concerned with the teacher's competence in English. Competence in English is crucial for English teachers. In the next section I will describe this point in more detail.

Teachers' language competence and pronunciation

As mentioned in chapter two, children have the ability to learn foreign pronunciation as well as native speakers. Children have a special facility for acquiring accurate pronunciation and intonation of foreign languages and are sensitive to sound. When the English teacher in kindergarten is a native speaker, the children may have a good chance of acquiring a very good accent. However, if the English teacher in kindergarten speaks poorly, the children may have incorrect pronunciation. Once children have incorrect pronunciation and use it repeatedly, it takes more time to correct them than to teach beginners. Therefore, accurate pronunciation of English teachers is required.

Most people think that people who come from English speaking countries may have accurate pronunciation, but this is not always true. For example, people from some areas of New Zealand or Australia may have unclear or unusual pronunciation. Incorrect pronunciation from teachers may have a negative

influence on young beginners, because young children have a superior ability to imitate the teacher's pronunciation. As mentioned above, if the teachers' pronunciation is good, the young learner's pronunciation will also be good. If the teachers' pronunciation is inaccurate, the young learners will also imitate the inaccurate pronunciation. Kindergartens should be careful when they employ English teachers and take steps to ensure their pronunciation is accurate.

Many parents prefer foreign English teachers to Chinese English teachers. Some kindergartens employ foreign teachers just because they feel it will draw students. The demand for foreign English teachers is high. However, there are not enough qualified native English teachers in Taiwan. Some kindergartens employ foreign English teachers who are not qualified in teaching English to kindergarten children. In the open-ended question of my questionnaires, many kindergarten teachers mention this problem.

Teaching experience and training

Teaching experience with young children is also important for kindergarten English teachers. Kindergarten English teachers should have teaching experience with young children or should be trained to teach English to young children. Because young children can only learn something when they listen, kindergarten English teachers should be trained in order to have the ability to communicate with young children in a way that keeps them quiet and listening to what the teachers say.

Some kindergartens employ native English teachers who do not have teaching experience and have not been trained in teaching English to young children.

Kindergartens do not offer training. It is a concern that not all of the native speakers of English know how to teach English to young children well. They need to be trained to be qualified English teachers for young children. Therefore, kindergartens should pay attention to teachers' qualifications when they employ new foreign English teachers. Moreover, there should be government guidelines concerning the qualifications and educational background of foreign English teachers.

The situation regarding Chinese English teachers is the same. Some are excellent, but some are not qualified. In order to increase the qualifications of Chinese English teachers, Taiwan must encourage improvements in the quality of English teaching in local universities.

4.3 Class size and time

Class size is another of the important factors for a successful foreign language program, particularly for preschool children. Fröhlich-Ward (1991) suggested that the ideal size of the foreign language teaching group should be ten children, at the most 12 children. In Opal Dunn's book "Beginning English with Young Children" (1990: 30), it is suggested that the ideal number of students in an English class is between twelve and twenty. I think the optimal class size for young children is between eight and ten. If class size is too big, there will not be ample opportunity for all students to practice individually. The English teacher cannot pay attention to all children and cannot correct each student's pronunciation. Young children like to be treated as individuals by the teacher. If kindergartens want children to have positive learning results, the English classes

should not be too big.

Class size should not be too big, but it should not be too small, either. Classes that are too small or too big are not good for learning. “Too few children makes it difficult to play some games and there is less interpersonal communication.”

(Dunn 1990: 30)

Time is also an important factor which may influence learning results. Met and Rhodes (1990: 438) suggested that “foreign language instruction should be scheduled daily, and for no less than 30 minutes.” Their suggestion concerns curriculum in elementary schools, but I think it is also appropriate for kindergartens. The English course should be provided daily, otherwise children will forget what they have learned previously. If kindergartens want their children to progress in English, the English class should be more than 30 minutes a day. The best option would be two hours per day in addition to using English to teach other subjects.

4.4 Teaching Methods

There are many different foreign language teaching methods, e.g. the grammar-translation approach, the direct method, the audio-lingual approach, the silent way, the whole language approach, the total physical response (TPR), communicative language learning, the natural approach, community language learning, suggestopedia etc. (Brown 1987, Tseng 2000). Every teaching method has its specific goal, either for listening, speaking, reading or writing. It is difficult to determine which one is the best. It depends on many factors, like the age and level of the students, class size, teaching time, teaching goals, and qualifications of the teachers. All teaching methods work but every method has its limitations. Therefore, in practice, many teachers use more than one teaching method. They choose the most suitable aspects from different teaching methods for their students and apply them flexibly. This is called the eclectic method (Chen, Chun-li 1998: 6).

Here I will concentrate on four teaching methods which are appropriate for kindergarten children. I will describe their characteristics and the use of these methods in kindergarten English classes.

The Direct Method

The direct method is from the school of thought that second language learning should be more like first language learning. Therefore, the classroom instruction involved in this method is conducted exclusively in the target language. The focus of this method is developing oral skills. Consequently, the teacher must be a native speaker of the target language or someone who speaks the target

language fluently (Brown 1987: 57 / Lin, Shou-hua 1997: 32). In order to increase comprehensible input, teaching is conducted with "lots of active oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules" (Brown 1987: 57).

The direct method was accepted and popularized by many private language schools at the end of the 19th century. The most famous one was the Berlitz language school. This method was used in small classes and with intensive study. In places with budget constraints, this method could not be utilized effectively. The use of this theory declined by the end of the first quarter of the 20th century. The trend of foreign language curricula returned to the Grammar Translation Method, or to a "reading approach", which emphasized reading skills. Interestingly, the direct method was revived in the middle of the 20th century – and has become known as the audiolingual method (Brown 1987: 57).

As this method does not use the students' first language, the teacher must use concrete objects, pictures or demonstration as aids for teaching. Because the teacher uses the target language all the time, a great deal of comprehensible input is provided. This method is appropriate for kindergarten children, but it might be too onerous for adult or adolescent foreign language beginners because first language explanations are not offered.

The Audiolingual Method

The audiolingual method has borrowed numerous foundation stones from the direct method. Like the direct method, the audiolingual method also insists on

using the target language to teach.

The audiolingual method is also called the “Army Method”. During World War II, the United States needed people to possess oral proficiency in the languages of their allies and their enemies, so the U.S. military provided funding for language courses that focused on oral skills. In the 1950s this method was used in many educational institutions (Brown 1987: 96).

The audiolingual method has the following characteristics: It is used with “a great deal of oral activity - pronunciation and pattern drills and conversation” (Brown 1987: 96). Typically, the lesson begins with a dialogue. The student is expected to mimic the dialogue and eventually memorize it. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills. Through repetitive drills the students will use the pattern sentences automatically which will be helpful for conversation. There is little or no grammatical explanation. Vocabulary is learned in context. Because this method insists on oral skills, tapes, language labs, and visual aids are heavily depended upon. Students’ errors are corrected immediately and successful responses are immediately reinforced. This method was influenced by behavioristic psychology and insisted on the importance of mimicry and memorization of set phrases (Brown 1987: 96 / Krashen 1995: 129 / Chen, Chun-li 1998: 7).

The shortcomings of this method are that it fails to teach long-term communicative proficiency, and it tends to be teacher centered. Today, student-centered teaching is thought to be preferable.

Although this method has its shortcomings, some of its teaching tools, e.g. the use of repetitive drills, tapes and visual aids to help students use pattern sentences automatically, are also appropriate for kindergarten children. Kindergarten English teachers should concentrate on correct pronunciation and error-free utterances, as stressed in the audiolingual method.

Total Physical Response

Total physical response (TPR) comes from the idea that memory is increased if it is stimulated through association with activity. Total Physical Response (TPR) originated in the 1960s and was further developed by James Asher in the 1970s. It is popular in foreign language teaching.

TPR combines many other insights in its theory, including principles of child language acquisition. Asher noticed that when children learn their first language, they appear to possess a lot of listening input before they speak. He also noticed that children's listening is accompanied by physical responses, e.g. reaching, grabbing, moving (Brown 1987: 163). Asher believed that children's listening comprehension is better than their speaking comprehension, and their listening comprehension will influence their speaking and writing comprehension. If children have strong listening comprehension, it will be easier for them to make progress in speaking, writing and reading. Therefore, he believed that an important first step in children's language learning is to foster good listening comprehension (Chang, Hsiang-chin 2000: 105).

In a TPR class, students do a large amount of listening and acting. TPR uses a lot of imperatives, even in proficiency levels. For example, when the teacher says,

“stand up”, “sit down” or “open the window”, students perform the activities the teacher has named. No verbal response is necessary. The commands can also be given by one student, and the others do as instructed (Tseng, yueh-hung 2000: 87). More complex imperative sentences can also be used in TPR, e.g. “Draw a rectangle on the chalkboard, walk quickly to the door and hit it” (Asher 1977:55, cited from Brown 1987: 164)

TPR is appropriate in kindergarten English classes because it is a combination of commands and activities. Translation through L1 (language one) is not necessary. If the teacher can demonstrate clearly with gestures, facial expressions or other teaching aids, students can understand without the assistance of L1. Furthermore, TPR is accompanied with physical activities, which children love to do (Chang, Hsiang-chin 2000: 106). In Taiwan, many English teachers of kindergarten and elementary schools use this teaching method.

As with any other teaching method, TPR also has its limitations. Although TPR is especially effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, it is not as suitable for more advanced learners. Moreover, when students have overcome the fear of speaking out in class, the class is like any other “communicative” language classroom (Brown 1987: 164).

The Natural Approach

The natural approach was developed by one of Krashen’s colleagues - Tracy Terrell. Its later development has been influenced by Krashen’s second language acquisition theory. (Krashen’s theory was presented in chapter three in this thesis.)

The natural approach is aimed at basic personal communication skills, e.g. conversations, shopping and listening to the radio. For the natural approach, the class is used to provide comprehensible input, therefore the teacher speaks only the target language in the classroom. The natural approach uses TPR activities at the beginning level of language learning to provide students with comprehensible input (Krashen 1995: 137 / Brown 1987: 164).

According to Krashen and Terrell, learners will presumably move through three stages (Tseng, yueh-hung 2000: 90 / Brown 1987: 164):

- (1) The preproduction stage: In this stage students develop listening comprehension skills. The teaching method of TPR can be used in this stage.
- (2) The early speech production stage: Students' errors will not be corrected, unless they will hinder the meaning entirely, because the teacher focuses on meaning at this stage, not on form.
- (3) Speech emerges: This stage includes free communication activity, more complex games, open-ended dialogues and discussions.

Some points of the natural approach are appropriate for kindergarten children. The advantages and criticisms of this teaching method were described in chapter three.

To summarize, there is no one teaching method for all children and for all situations. Teaching situations differ from classroom to classroom, and every child is different (Dunn 1990: vi). How to choose one or more appropriate teaching methods is a crucial factor in the success of language learning in

children. The responsibility of a teacher is to choose the best of other people's insights and adapt them to his own situation.

4.5 Principles of teaching English to young children

Some points are important for young children's foreign language courses:

- "teaching units must be short to reflect the limited concentration span of young children."
- "the whole child should be catered for with singing, dancing and attractive visual materials as well as work with pen and paper." (Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 99)
- Young children learn soon and also forget soon, therefore a complete lesson should involve "the learning of something new, the revision of something well-known and a period of consolidation of items already learnt but needing more practice." (Fröhlich-Ward 1991: 108)

Curtain and Pesola (1994: xiii) listed 12 key concepts for successful foreign language courses in elementary and middle schools. Some of them are also appropriate for kindergarten pupils:

1. Target language is consistently conducted in the language course.
2. "Learning occurs in meaningful, communicative contexts that carry significance for the students", e.g. games, songs, stories, and experiences with arts, crafts and sports.
3. Learning occurs with concrete experiences, e.g. with visuals, props, realia, and hands-on activities.

These principles are useful for English teachers since every teaching method has its limitations and may not only be applied respectively in the class.

If teachers can manage to capture children's enthusiasm, and keep it, by presenting appropriate lessons, the children will make progress in English and also have fun. This can ensure the foundation for a life-long interest in the English language for the children. (Dunn 1990: 1)

5. Kindergartens in Kaohsiung and in Taiwan

Kindergartens in Kaohsiung are administrated by the Bureau of Education. According to the rules, kindergartens are for children between 4 and 6 years old. Information from the Bureau of Education in Kaohsiung explains that there were 166 registered kindergartens in Kaohsiung in 2000. Among them there are 67 public kindergartens (ca. 40%) and 99 registered private kindergartens (ca. 60%).

Many theories of early childhood education from western countries have been implemented in Taiwan's kindergartens, such as the theories of F. Froebel and D. M. Montessori. Some kindergartens in Taiwan use a didactive instruction method and some use a corner teaching method. Many kindergartens in Taiwan insist that they use the Montessori method. However, according to Lin Hsiu-hui (1997) Master's thesis, Montessori teachers in Taiwan's kindergartens are not all properly qualified. In another Master's thesis, Lin Yi-ching (1997) indicated that Montessori teaching in Taiwan's kindergartens is mostly superficial. Some teachers do not understand Montessori's ideas or how to use her teaching instruments. There are also certain kindergartens that use the name of Montessori simply to attract parents.

Often, kindergartens divide the children into three different classes according to their ages:

1. low grade (for children from 3 to 4 years old)
2. middle grade (for children from 4 to 5 years old)

3. upper grade (for children from 5 to 6 years old)

Some kindergartens put children of different ages in one class to form a mixed class. Other kindergartens prefer to have children of the same age in one class.

There are children who attend kindergartens only in the morning (half day) while others attend kindergartens for the whole day. As the price for a half day is not much cheaper than a whole day, most parents have their children attend kindergartens for the entire day.

Besides kindergartens, Taiwan also has nurseries. Nurseries are for children one month old to 6 years old. Therefore, kids have a choice between attending a nursery or a kindergarten. In this thesis, I will concentrate on the English classes in kindergartens. However, nurseries should be mentioned briefly in this section because nurseries in Taiwan are similar to kindergartens. Many nurseries also offer English classes. Some of them even call themselves a bilingual language school or an American school. They offer a half day or a full day English course. The differences between kindergartens and nurseries are illustrated in the following points:

1. While nurseries are administrated by the Bureau of Social Affairs, kindergartens are administrated by the Bureau of Education.
2. The rules dictated by the government for setting up a nursery are not as strict as for setting up a kindergarten. Many nurseries in Taiwan are, in principle, the same as kindergartens.

All private registered kindergartens in Kaohsiung offer English classes to their students. On the contrary, no public kindergarten in Kaohsiung offers English classes because, as yet, the program has not been developed.

The students in public kindergartens do not have the opportunity to learn English, unless their parents send them to an English cram school or teach them at home. If the parents send their children to cram schools, the parents, or someone in the family, must have time to take the children to school and pick them up. For parents who do not have much time and money, it would be more convenient if kindergartens could offer satisfactory English classes.

5.1 Kindergarten English classes in Taiwan in general

The government has no laws concerning English classes in Taiwan's kindergartens. Therefore, kindergartens cannot receive any consultations or help from the government regarding English classes. The teaching hours per week as well as teaching materials vary from kindergarten to kindergarten. It depends on the opinion of the kindergarten directors. Some kindergartens offer English classes just because of market trends. They are only interested in making money. Some kindergartens use English classes as the main focus of their kindergartens.

Although many kindergartens call themselves "bilingual" kindergartens, they have differing definitions of what a bilingual kindergarten is. Some kindergartens only offer English classes two or three days per week at 30 minutes per day and they call themselves "bilingual kindergartens". Other "bilingual kindergartens" offer English classes five days per week, 30 minutes per day.

Some kindergartens write in their advertisements or on the sign in front of their kindergartens that they offer half-day English classes and half day Chinese courses. However, the definitions of half-day English classes are also very different in each kindergarten. According to my questionnaires, there are some kindergartens whose English classes are one hour per day and they still promote their schools as having half-day English classes. It is difficult for parents to know the true conditions of kindergarten English classes by only reading the kindergarten's advertisements.

Some kindergartens offer more than one type of English course to allow parents more choice. Parents can depend on their financial condition to make the choice. Not all kindergartens center on English classes as the focal point of their program. Some kindergartens feel English classes are unimportant and only offer them one or two days per week for 30 to 40 minutes per day.

Most kindergartens have the same aim which is to allow children to have fun with English and to inspire an interest in learning English. However, because of different qualities of English teachers, teaching materials, class size and teaching periods, the students' learning results are different in each kindergarten (Chang, Liang-shao 1994, p.18).

In general, English classes in Taiwan's kindergartens can be divided into the following types:

1. Kindergartens that cooperate with language institutes or English cram

schools: Some kindergartens let language institutes or English cram schools take charge of the English classes for them. This includes teaching materials, teaching aids, the resources and training of English teachers, as well as teaching schedules. The language institutes or English cram schools are usually publishing companies for the English teaching materials too. They employ English teachers and train them to use their teaching materials. Most of Kaohsiung's kindergarten English classes are of this type. These courses have the following advantages:

a) Kindergartens do not have to worry about teaching materials, teaching aids

or providing resources for English teachers. Moreover, kindergartens are not required to plan English teaching schedules.

b) Language institutes or English cram schools train their English teachers.

Some language institutes even offer free training classes every month. The training is varied in different language institutes. In general, it includes teaching methods, classroom management, games, English songs and how to make teaching aids. This training can be very helpful for kindergarten English teachers.

c) The language institutes or cram schools have many English teachers. If kindergartens do not like the English teacher, or have problems with him or her, they can ask to change the English teacher without any difficulties.

d) Some language institutes also offer free English training to the kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers two times per semester, if the kindergartens cooperate with them. It benefits both kindergartens and language institutes, as kindergarten teachers will sometimes help children review their English homework outside of English class. It is helpful for English teachers.

2. Kindergartens that employ part time English teachers themselves: Some kindergartens have English classes only one or two days per week and they employ part time English teachers themselves. For this type of English course, the English teacher usually has to prepare his own teaching materials, teaching aids, and plan his own schedules. There are disadvantages to this

type of English course:

a) Kindergartens themselves do not train their English teachers. If the English teachers have been trained in English cram schools, they might know how to teach children English. Otherwise, it may be very problematic. Even though some English teachers have already taught in English cram schools, they might lack the necessary teaching experience to effectively instruct young children, since most English cram schools are for elementary, not preschool children (Chang, Liang-shao 1994 : 17). These English teachers might employ the same methods that they use to teach elementary school children as they would to teach kindergarten children. Because they do not understand young children, their teaching methods may be too difficult for younger children to comprehend.

b) The English teachers must plan their lessons and buy or make their own teaching aids, which takes a lot of time. Furthermore, as the English teachers do not receive any additional training regarding the instruction of kindergarten children, they may use the same teaching methods, materials and aids for many years without changing. They may ignore or be unaware of current trends in teaching young children a second language, which would be of great detriment to the students.

3. Kindergartens that employ full time English teachers themselves: If the kindergartens have many English classes and many students, they might employ one or two full time English teachers, either of Chinese or foreign nationalities. However, some kindergartens of this type still have the same shortcomings as kindergartens that employ part time teachers. Regardless of

having part or full time English teachers, most kindergartens do not have qualified people to train their English teachers.

There are also kindergartens, which employ their own full time English teachers and buy textbooks from language institutes. These kindergartens send their English teachers to language institutes for training. The kindergartens pay a percentage of the training fee and the teachers pay the remainder.

4. Kindergartens that import teaching materials from overseas and are the sole agents of the teaching materials in Taiwan. These kindergartens seek foreign teachers overseas and train them to teach children English. These kindergartens use their own teaching materials and have their own foreign teachers. They also offer their teachers and materials to other kindergartens. The advantage of this type of kindergarten is that these kindergartens have many different teaching materials which cannot be found in Taiwan.

5. Kindergartens that offer full day English classes: Some kindergartens have full day English classes and are very expensive. This kind of kindergarten usually has foreign English teachers. Some of these kindergartens call themselves American kindergartens. In full day English classes, other subjects like science, fine arts, social studies, physical education, and human development are also taught in English. This type of kindergarten English immersion course is very expensive. Very few families can afford it, so there are not many of these kindergartens in Taiwan.

6. Schools that offer English classes from kindergarten to Grade 6: There

are schools in Taiwan which offer English classes from kindergarten up to the 6th grade in elementary school. Another advantage is that children moving from kindergarten to elementary courses will be able to make an easier transition within the program.

Different types of teaching methods in English classes

There are many different types of teaching methods in kindergarten English classes. Some small kindergartens only have one Chinese English teacher. Some kindergartens have both foreign English teachers and Chinese English teachers. If a kindergarten has both Chinese and foreign English teachers, there are two main types of English instruction provided. One type is: the foreign English teacher teaches new lessons and the Chinese English teacher does the review in other class periods. In some kindergartens the situation is the opposite: the Chinese English teacher teaches new lessons, and the foreign English teacher does the review of the lesson. (Chang, Liang-shao 1994, p.18.)

If kindergartens have Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers, they generally allow Chinese English teachers to teach more hours than foreign English teachers, as the foreign teachers command higher wages. For example, if the English class is 5 days per week, the foreign English teacher teaches only one day per week and the Chinese English teacher teaches the remaining four. In general, parents prefer foreign English teachers. However, whether foreign English teachers teach better than Chinese English teachers is disputable. Quality of teaching varies per individual teacher. It depends on their qualifications, their training, their preparation and how devoted they are to their jobs.

For young children, English classes with a joyful atmosphere are important. Therefore, games and English songs are often used in kindergarten English classes. In addition, some English teachers encourage students to color or draw pictures as vocabulary practice.

5.2 Problems in English classes in Kaohsiung and in Taiwan

From the open-ended questions in my questionnaires, from articles in magazines, and through interviews with kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and kindergarten English teachers, I found out that there are some problems in kindergarten English classes. These problems can be divided into five points:

1. The provision of English classes in kindergartens is against the law.
2. Problems with Chinese English teachers.
3. Problems with foreign English teachers.
4. Oversized classes in kindergarten English classes.
5. Most parents do not help their children do English review or ask their children to listen to their tape recorder at home.

1. The provision of English classes in kindergartens is against the law:

English classes in kindergartens are a trend in Taiwan. Although almost all private kindergartens in Taiwan offer English classes, the provision of English classes in kindergartens is against the law. That is why public kindergartens do not offer English classes. Because it is against the law, kindergarten English classes cannot receive any help from the government. (Chang, Liang-shao 1994, p.18.) In addition, it is impossible to expect that the government will offer any training for kindergarten English teachers because of the law forbidding the provision of English classes in kindergartens. Furthermore, it is against the law to employ foreign English teachers in kindergartens. Therefore, foreign kindergarten English teachers cannot apply for working allowances.

Due to this law, there are no regulations governing teacher qualifications or educational background. Some kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers complain that the pronunciation of some Chinese English teachers is incorrect, which may be indicative of a lack of proper qualifications.

2. Problems with Chinese English teachers:

Some Chinese English teachers take a teaching job as an interim job until they find a better job position. They would rather teach in an elementary school or work elsewhere. Hence, they do not pay much attention preparing to teach or improving their abilities. Their lack of passion also influences the quality of their teaching. (Chang, Liang-shao 1994, p.19.)

Because most English teachers are part time teachers in kindergartens and they leave the school soon after class, they rarely have contact with children or their parents. They do not take the opportunity to tell parents how their children are progressing in English class or explain how the parents could assist their children in reviewing their English homework.

3. Problems with foreign English teachers:

- a) Most foreign English teachers stay in Taiwan for only a short period of time, anywhere from a few months to a few years. Through my discussions with kindergarten directors, I found out that foreign English teachers changing their jobs too often is a major complaint. Often foreign English teachers quit their jobs in kindergartens during the semester. This causes trouble because kindergartens have to find new English teachers in the middle of the semester,

which is difficult. In addition, children have to constantly adjust to new teachers. This is difficult for the children. When the foreign English teachers have different accents, the children may get confused.

- b) Some foreign teachers, who are new in Taiwan, do not adjust well to life in Taiwan. They often get sick, and therefore, are absent. This can be a genuine problem for kindergarten English classes.
- c) Some foreign English teachers have not been trained in teaching English to young children. They do not understand how to teach young children English or how to make English classes interesting.
- d) Some kindergarten teachers complain that there are foreign English teachers, who lack patience and do not pay much attention to their teaching. For most kindergarten foreign English teachers, teaching in the kindergarten is only one of their part time jobs. After teaching in one English class, they have to quickly go to another English class or even to another kindergarten. Therefore they do not have time to have contact with the children outside of class time. It is a pity that this interferes with the establishment of strong relationships between the children and the foreign teacher.
- e) Most foreign English teachers are active, but some of them are not. Some kindergarten directors complain that it is a challenge to find superior foreign English teachers. Moreover, the pay of foreign English teachers is higher than Chinese English teachers. From a financial standpoint, kindergartens would rather employ Chinese English teachers.

f) A foreign English teacher wrote in the questionnaire: "kindergarten children are too young to sit still and memorize flashcards." This comment reveals the problem that many English teachers (both Chinese and foreign English teachers) have difficulty in keeping children quiet in class and encouraging them to listen. In fact, if English teachers know how to get along with young children, they can easily manage classroom discipline. In many English classes, the kindergarten teachers are in the classroom to help English teachers control the students. However, if the class is too boring, it is difficult for the kindergarten teachers to make students concentrate on the teaching. Therefore, the most important concern when hiring foreign English teachers should be their qualifications. Whether they have knowledge and experience in teaching English to young children and can create a positive, vibrant classroom is crucial.

4. The class sizes of kindergarten English classes are too big:

When I conducted my survey, the average kindergarten class size in Kaohsiung was between 15 and 20 students. Some kindergartens combine two classes to form one English class, resulting in approximately 30 - 40 students in one English class. The class size is much bigger than in English cram schools, which only have 8-15 students in one class. If kindergartens and English cram schools use the same teaching materials and teachers have the comparable qualifications, the academic results in a class with 15 students should be better than in a class with 30 students. Due to oversized English classes in kindergartens, the English teachers do not have time to correct children's pronunciation individually. The large class size in kindergartens has a negative influence on students' results.

(Chang, Liang-shao 1994, p.19.)

5. Most parents do not help their children do English review or ask their children to listen to their tape recorder at home. Although most parents offer little assistance to their children, they still have high expectations for their children and their kindergarten English classes. If parents can help their children listen to their English tape recorder at home every day, their children will learn better. It is a great pity that many parents make the excuse that they do not have time to help their children do review.

6. Analysis of the questionnaires

6.1 Research design

This thesis was designed to explore the conditions of kindergartens in Kaohsiung. The opinions of kindergarten directors, teachers, Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers was taken into consideration in regards to developing optimal English classes in kindergartens. In addition, this thesis attempts to discover the problems and flaws of kindergarten English classes and make suggestions on how to improve them.

The instruments utilized in this study include: classroom observation and three different kinds of questionnaires, one questionnaire for kindergarten directors, another for both kindergarten and Chinese English teachers, and one for foreign English teachers. The contents in the questionnaires for Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers are similar. The main difference is that for Chinese English teachers the questionnaires are in Chinese, and for foreign teachers the questionnaires are in English.

The questions, which concern the effectiveness of instruction, appear in all four questionnaires, e.g.:

1. The current and ideal length and frequency of English classes.
2. The current and ideal class size.
3. The preferred nationality of the English teachers.
4. The ideal age to begin learning English.
5. The ideal language to be used in kindergarten English classes.

Besides general questions, there are some questions that vary in the four questionnaires. For example, in English teachers' questionnaires there are questions concerning the following points:

1. The English teachers' educational background.
2. The English teachers' teaching and training experience in teaching children English.
3. The teaching method, which the instructor employs.
4. The teachers' opinions about what an optimal English class would be.

The questionnaire for kindergarten directors is designed to investigate the conditions of English classes during the research period, as well as their opinions about government subsidies to kindergarten English classes.

6.2 How the questionnaire research was conducted

According to the Bureau of Education information website for Kaohsiung, there are 67 public kindergartens and 99 registered private kindergartens in the year 2000. Because public kindergartens do not offer English classes, only private kindergartens received questionnaires.

Before distributing the questionnaires, all registered private kindergartens in Kaohsiung were contacted to ask whether they provide English classes. All private kindergartens do. This clearly indicates that there is a large demand for English education in Kaohsiung's kindergartens.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected during August and October of 2000. They were distributed to all registered private kindergartens in Kaohsiung.

Some questionnaires were posted with self-addressed return envelopes, while some were distributed and collected by hand. Some kindergarten directors were very cooperative and friendly. They filled in the questionnaires quickly and returned them as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, there were difficulties in doing questionnaire research. The main problem was due to the reluctance of some kindergarten directors to share information regarding their programs.

6.3 Data Analysis

After the questionnaires were completed and collected, they were examined. Those which were not filled in properly had to be removed. Eventually, 75 questionnaires from kindergarten directors, 117 questionnaires from Chinese English teachers, 22 questionnaires from foreign English teachers and 699 questionnaires from kindergarten teachers were deemed valid and able to be analyzed.

The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 8.0 for Windows and Microsoft Excel on a personal computer. The data from the questionnaires was analyzed and displayed in frequency and percentage counts.

There were very few questionnaires collected from foreign English teachers because there are not many foreign kindergarten English teachers in Kaohsiung. Some kindergartens do not have any **foreign** English teachers at all. The

kindergartens, which have foreign English teachers, usually have only one foreign English teacher. Some foreign English teachers also said they were too busy to complete the questionnaire because they teach in many different cram schools.

The following section will examine the data of the questionnaires, beginning with the basic information of the subjects, then analyzing their opinions to see whether it is appropriate for kindergarten children to learn English. Next, through the questionnaires, we will explore the conditions of kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung like class period, class size, language used in English classes, and teaching materials. Concurrently, I will analyze the questionnaires from kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and English teachers to see what their opinions are about developing optimal kindergarten English classes. After that, I will expound upon the educational background, teaching and training experiences of Chinese and foreign English teachers. I will define the qualifications that English teachers should have. Then, I will discuss what should be included in kindergarten English classes. Finally, I will focus on the help that parents can provide for their children to review material and improve students' learning results in kindergarten English classes.

6.3.1 Basic information regarding the subjects of the questionnaire research

The number and gender of the subjects are as follows:

Table 1: Basic information of the subjects

Type of questionnaires	Amount (Percentage) of valid questionnaires
Kindergarten directors	Male: 4 (5.3 %) Female: 71 (94.7 %) Total: 75 (100 %)
Kindergarten teachers	Male: 0 Female: 699 (100 %) Total: 699 (100 %)
Chinese English teachers	Male: 2 (1.7 %) Female: 115 (98.3 %) Total: 117 (100 %)
Foreign English teachers	Male: 10 (45.5 %) Female: 12 (54.5 %) Total: 22 (100 %)

In my research, there are 913 valid questionnaires. Among them there are 75 questionnaires from kindergarten directors, 699 questionnaires from kindergarten teachers, 117 questionnaires from Chinese English teachers and 22 questionnaires from foreign English teachers. Table 1 shows that all kindergarten teachers are female. This is because most people feel that kindergarten teachers should be female. They believe that men are not as patient and careful as women.

Patience and care are desirable quantities, particularly for kindergarten teachers. Therefore, kindergarten directors in Taiwan do not like to employ men as kindergarten teachers. Most men do not like to work as kindergarten teachers either. Both kindergarten directors and the majority of men believe that it is not appropriate for a man to take care of kindergarten children. Because of this, the majority of Chinese English teachers are female, too.

On the contrary, there is no preference of sex for foreign English teachers. Table 1 indicates in my questionnaires that 45.5 % of kindergarten foreign English teachers are male, and 54.5% of foreign English teachers are female. The percentage of male foreign English teachers is relatively high in comparison with Chinese English teachers. This has something to do with the characteristics of people from Western countries and those from Taiwan. People from Western countries are perceived to be more active than Taiwanese people. Moreover, most foreign English teachers are young people, so they have a higher energy level and play well with children regardless of gender. Therefore, when kindergarten directors choose foreign English teachers, the personality of foreign English teachers is more important than their gender. Parents and kindergarten directors expect to have foreign English teachers who are active and are loved by the children.

6.3.2 Opinions about beginning to learn English in early childhood

As far as kindergarten English classes are concerned, the first question to be asked is whether or not it is too early for kindergarten children to learn English.

First of all, I will try to discover why most parents want their children to start to learn English early. Then we will examine the opinions of the subjects in order to learn whether it is too early for kindergarten children to learn English and if kindergartens should even offer English classes. Finally, I will discuss whether English learning will have a negative influence on a child's first language.

Table 2: What is the main reason that your students start to learn English at an early age?

	kindergarten directors	kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	foreign English teachers
Preparation for primary school and junior high school	6 (8.0 %)	61 (8.7 %)	24 (20.5 %)	3 (13 %).6
The earlier the better and no pressure.	59 (78.7 %)	609 (87.1 %)	82 (70.1 %)	13 (59 %).1
They will travel or study in foreign countries.	1 (1.3 %)	1 (0.1 %)		
Others	6 (8 %)	13 (1.86 %)	10 (8.55 %)	5 (22.73 %)
Missing value	3 (4.0 %)	15 (2.1 %)	1 (0.9 %)	1 (4.5 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Many children in Kaohsiung and in Taiwan start to learn English in early childhood. What is the main reason that they start to learn English at this early age? In order to answer this, participants were provided with four opinions to the question. The items to be chosen from are as follows:

1. Preparation for English classes in primary school and junior high school.
2. The earlier the better, and they do not have pressure in learning.
3. They will travel or study in foreign countries in the future.
4. Others _____

Table two indicates that “the earlier the better, and no pressure in learning” is the most frequently chosen item by all four groups. It suggests that many people in Taiwan believe in the theory “the earlier the better” for foreign language learning. As mentioned in chapter two, there are many studies that support this theory. We can also find many examples around us that people start to learn a foreign language in early childhood and achieve positive results. That is also why many people believe it is true. Young children have less pressure than older children or adults in learning foreign languages.

Table two shows that the second most frequently chosen item is “preparation for English classes in primary schools and junior high schools”.

There were some subjects who chose the answer “others” and wrote the following:

- It is a trend in Taiwan.
- Parents want their children to get good jobs.
- Parents want their children to start to learn English early.

- Parents feel speaking English is very important.
- The children and their families want to immigrate to English speaking countries.

All the answers above coincide with why children in Taiwan start to learn English early. However, the belief that “the earlier the better” is the main reason parents want their children to learn English in early childhood.

Table 3: Is it too early for kindergarten children to learn English?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	3 (4.0 %)	35 (5.0%)	5 (4.3 %)	1 (4.5 %)
No	69 (92.0 %)	637 (91.1 %)	111 (94.9 %)	21 (95.5%)
It depends on the English class, whether it is for fun or for good learning results.	1 (1.3 %)			
Missing value	2 (2.7 %)	27 (3.9 %)	1 (0.9 %)	
Total	75(100.0 %)	699(100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table three indicates that while more than 90 % of the four groups of subjects believe that it is not too early for kindergarten children to learn English, very few kindergarten directors and teachers (about 5%) have the opposite opinion.

In order to decide if it is too early for kindergarten children to learn English or not, one kindergarten director wrote that it depends on whether the English class is for fun or for good learning results. According to her opinion, if the English class is for fun, it is not too early for kindergarten children to learn English. If the aim of the English class is for good learning results, then it is too early. I am of the opinion that an English class in kindergarten can be effectively utilized for good learning results and for fun.

Table 4: Should kindergartens offer English classes?

	kindergarten directors	kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers	Total
Yes	70 (93.3 %)	652 (93.3 %)	115 (98.3 %)	21 (95.5 %)	858 (93.98 %)
No	3 (4.0 %)	37 (5.3 %)	1 (0.9 %)	1 (4.5 %)	42 (4.6 %)
Missing value	2 (2.7 %)	10 (1.4 %)	1 (0.9 %)		13 (1.42 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)	913 (100.0 %)

As mentioned above, most subjects believe that it is not too early for kindergarten children to learn English. The next question asked was: should kindergartens offer English classes? Table four reveals that on average, 93.98 % of the subjects believe that kindergartens should offer English classes. Only about 5% of the subjects are of the opinion that it is inappropriate for kindergartens to offer English classes.

Table 5: What is the optimal age to learn English?

	kindergarten director	kindergarten teacher	Chinese English teacher	Foreign English teacher
Before kindergarten (before age 3)	12 (16.0 %)	140 (20.0 %)	39 (33 %)	12 (54.5 %)
3 years old	47 (62.7 %)	360 (51.5 %)	55 (47 %)	4 (18.2 %)
4 years old	9 (12.0 %)	151(21.6 %)	20 (17.1 %)	3 (13.6 %)
5 years old	1 (1.3 %)	29 (4.1 %)		3 (13.6 %)
Elementary school	3 (4.0 %)	19 (2.7 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Missing value	3 (4.0 %)		1 (0.9 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table five indicates that for most foreign English teachers (54.5 %), the optimal age for starting to learn English is before kindergarten (before 3 years old), while for most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers, the optimal age is 3 years old. Only 16 % of kindergarten directors and only 20 % of kindergarten teachers believe that it is optimal to begin learning English before 3 years of age. However, 33 % of Chinese English teachers believe it is better to learn English before 3 years old. I think English teachers are better qualified to decide what is the optimal age for children to learn English than kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers are, as it is English teachers who are teaching the children English. According to the data in my questionnaire, many English teachers agree that beginning to learn English at an early age is best.

Table five also shows that very few subjects believe that the optimal age to learn English is at 5 years old or at elementary school. At elementary school ages, children are required to learn many new things at school and they have the additional pressure of tests. At, or prior to age three, children have sufficient time to learn new things. In addition, very young children have a strong will and desire to learn and have less learning pressure. Therefore, it is better for children to learn English at an early age.

To summarize, tables three, four and five indicate that a high percentage of the subjects believe that it is appropriate for children of kindergarten age to learn English.

Table 6: Influence of English in Chinese

	kindergarten director	kindergarten teacher	Chinese English teacher	Foreign English teacher
Positive	25 (33.3 %)	138 (19.7 %)	29 (24.8 %)	6 (27.3 %)
Negative	1 (1.3 %)	6 (0.9 %)	13 (11.1 %)	3 (13.6 %)
Positive and negative	13 (17.3 %)	164 (23.5 %)	75 (64.1 %)	9 (40.9 %)
Without any influence	36 (48.0 %)	383 (54.8 %)		3 (13.6 %)
Missing value		8 (1.1 %)		1 (4.5 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

When talking about learning a foreign language in early childhood, many people

are afraid that the foreign language learning will have a negative impact on the child's first language. Table 6 shows that most kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers believe that there is no connection between learning English and speaking Chinese. Most Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers believe that learning English has positive and negative influences on speaking Chinese.

I believe that for young children, English learning has a positive influence on their Chinese abilities. I would like to give the example of my nieces, Sandy and Angela. As mentioned in chapter two, Sandy and Angela began learning English when they were at the age of 3.5 years old. In an English cram school, they have learned vocabulary and information that they can say in English but cannot yet articulate in Chinese. The knowledge and the words they have learned in English also help them in understanding Chinese. Sandy has learned English for more than one year and Angela has learned for 6 months. My sister and I do not notice any negative influences, from learning English, on their Chinese.

The Japanese educator Schichita said that young children needed to know more words in order to help them develop their thought and knowledge. I think learning English has assisted my nieces Sandy and Angela in developing their thinking because through English learning they acquire more vocabulary and knowledge. The influence of English learning for them is positive.

6.3.3 Conditions of English classes in Kaohsiung's kindergartens and opinions regarding optimal English classes in kindergartens

In this section, I will discuss the conditions of kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung from different points. At the same time, I will analyze the opinions of the four groups of subjects, trying to discern what would constitute an optimal English class. The different points I researched are:

1. Class period per day and per week
2. Class size
3. Language to be used in kindergarten English classes
4. What should be included in kindergarten English classes
5. Should kindergarten children be given listening or writing homework?

6.3.3.1 Class period during the research period

Table 7: English classes per week during the research period

Number of days English classes are offered per week	Number of kindergartens	Percent
1 day	4	5.3 %
2 days	15	20.0 %
3 days	15	20.0 %
4 days	10	13.3 %
5 days	30	40.0 %
Offer 3 kinds of English classes: 2 days, 5 days, 6 days per week	1	1.3 %
Total	75	100.0 %

Table 8: English classes per day and per week during the researching period

		Class period per day									Total
		30-40 minutes	80 minutes	half day	all day	Offer 3 kinds of classes: 30 minutes (2 days), half day (5 days), whole day (6 days per week)	Offer 2 kinds of classes: half day English class, full day English class	Offer 3 kinds of classes: 50 minutes per day for upper grade, 40 minutes per day for middle grade, 30 minutes per day for low grade	Offer 2 kinds of classes: 30 min. per day and 2 hours per day.	120 minutes	
Class per week	1 day	3	1								4
	2 days	15									15
	3 days	13	2								15
	4 days	8		1	1						10
	5 days	20	4	2			1	1	1	1	30
	Offer 3 kinds of classes: 2 days, 5 days, 6 days					1					1
Total		59	7	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	75

From table seven and table eight we can see that five day a week English classes, at 30-40 minutes per day, are most common in Kaohsiung's kindergartens.

According to table seven, 40 % of kindergartens have English classes 5 days per week. Six day a week classes are seldom. As I conducted my questionnaire research in 2000, children still had to attend school every other Saturday. From January 2001, there will be only 5 school days per week. Afterward, six day a week English classes will be impossible.

Table eight shows that half or full day English classes are rare in Kaohsiung's kindergartens. Because many English cram schools and nursery schools offer half or full day classes, I think in the near future more and more kindergartens will do the same. They will need to meet the demands of the market.

Table seven also reveals that one day a week English classes are rare; only 5.3% of the kindergartens are of this type. This is because children cannot really progress with so little English instruction. Moreover, if the kindergarten only offers a one day a week English class, it is difficult to persuade parents to enroll in the kindergarten.

There are also kindergartens which offer more than one type of English classes, in order for parents to have more choices within the kindergarten. For example, from my questionnaire research, I discovered that there are the following types of kindergartens in Kaohsiung:

1. A kindergarten offers three kinds of English classes:

- English classes of 30 minutes per day at 2 days per week;
 - half day English class (5 days per week);
 - full day English class (6 days per week).
2. A kindergarten offers two kinds of English classes: a half day English class and a full day English class.
3. A kindergarten offers three kinds of English classes for children of different ages:
- For children of an upper grade, the English class is 50 minutes per day.
 - For children of a middle grade, the English class is 40 minutes per day.
 - For children of a lower grade, the English class is 30 minutes per day.
4. A kindergarten offers two kinds of English classes: 30 minutes per day and 2 hours per day.

In table eight we can also see that there are very few kindergartens which offer multi-choice English classes because they are too complicated. In most cases, only the kindergartens which offer two or more hours of English per day, offer multi-choice. They provide different English classes so that parents may have other, less expensive choices. Kindergartens with half or full day English classes are structured to meet parental demands. Some parents do not care how expensive the tuition is, they want their children to have the best environment to learn English. Therefore, they choose kindergartens with half or full day English classes. Naturally, these parents can afford to pay more. For most families in Kaohsiung and in Taiwan, the tuition for half or full day English classes is too expensive.

6.3.3.2 Optimal class length

Table 9: Opinions of kindergarten directors (1 period = 40 minutes)

	Optimal period per day					Total
		1 period	2 periods	3 periods	More than 5 periods	
Optimal class Days per week	1 day	3	1			4
	2 days	3				3
	3 days	10	1			11
	4 days	2	1			3
	5 days	35	9		2	46
	6 days	2		1		3
Total		54	12	1	2	70

Table 10: Opinions of kindergarten teachers

	Optimal period per day						Total
		1 period	2 periods	3 periods	4 periods	More than 5 periods	
Optimal class days per week	1 day	5	3	3			11
	2 days	56	12				68
	3 days	121	30	5		5	161
	4 days	24					24
	5 days	182	56	12	9	3	262
	6 days	3	4				7
Total		391	105	20	9	8	533

Table 11: Opinions of Chinese English teachers

	Optimal period per day					Total
		1 period	2 periods	3 periods	More than 5 periods	
Optimal class days per week	1 day					
	2 days	11				11
	3 days	21				21
	4 days	4		2	2	8
	5 days	43	9	6	4	62
	6 days	2			1	3
Total		77	9	8	7	105

Table 12: Opinions of foreign English teachers

	optimal period per day			Total
		1 period	3 periods	
Optimal class days per week	1 day	3		3
	5 days	4	12	16
Total		7	12	19

Tables 9, 10, 11 and 12 reveal the opinions of kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers, Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers regarding the number of classes and periods per week. The data indicates that most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers feel that 5 days per week for one period (30-40 minutes) per day is favored. As we can see in table 12, according to foreign English teachers, the optimal English

class is also 5 days per week, but instead of one period per day, foreign English teachers prefer 3 periods per day.

I also believe that it is optimal to have English classes of five days per week for each class. It helps students have better learning results. If children have English classes every day, the teacher can review and teach new words or sentences each day. In addition, if the English teacher teaches the students 5 days per week, he or she will be able to establish strong relationships with the students and get to know the students better. Seeing students 5 days a week also allows the teacher to be more cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, if the teacher has more contact with the children, the relationship between the teacher and the students will be closer and the children will love the English teacher and the English language more.

Having English classes every day is also of great advantage to the kindergartens as they can earn more money than if classes were held less frequently. From the viewpoint of English teachers, they prefer the 5 day a week English classes as well. They feel that the children can achieve better results in English being in class so often. Impressive results are what the parents like to see. However, it can be too expensive for some families to afford the tuition. Therefore, it is hoped that the government will subsidize kindergarten English classes in the future, so that children from poor families can also have the opportunity to learn English before they go to elementary school.

An English class of 5 days per week is of the greatest benefit to all involved. Yet another question regarding kindergarten English classes is how long should the

daily class period be? From my classroom observation, I found that 30 minutes per day is insufficient. If a class period is too short, it will not give children enough time to get “warmed up” or achieve adequate acquisition (Dunn 1990: 29). Moreover, the students do not have adequate time to practice individually before the class time is over. Because of that reason, I am of the opinion that the optimal English class should be at least 2 hours per day. During this 2 or 3 hour class there should be a break time. Even though the class is two or three hours per day, if the English teacher teaches well and uses many games, the children will not feel bored.

If the English class is two or three hours per day, then the immersion method can be utilized in the English classes. I believe English class conducted through immersion is a favorable method, so that children can learn many subjects in English, e.g. science, geography, art and music. Teachers using the immersion method must be highly competent and confident in their knowledge of the English language. In addition, I think every kindergarten should have at least one full time English teacher, so that he or she can talk with children at any time, in playing, eating, and working. Children can learn English well in this way and can talk automatically without hesitating to think before they talk.

6.3.3.3 Class size

Table 13: Class size of kindergarten English classes during the research period

Class size	Chinese English teachers		Foreign English teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Under 10 students	7	6.0 %	3	13.6
10-15 students	18	15.4 %	7	31.8 %
16-20 students	39	33.3 %	6	27.3 %
21-25 students	42	35.9 %	6	27.3 %
More than 26 students	5	4.3 %		
Missing value	6	5.1 %		
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100.0 %

Table 14: Optimal class size

Class size	Kindergarten teachers	Kindergarten directors	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Under 10 students	112 (16.0 %)	7 (9.3 %)	19 (16.2 %)	10 (45.5 %)
10-15 students	375 (53.6 %)	52 (69.3 %)	73 (62.4 %)	12 (54.5 %)
16-20 students	91 (13.0 %)	13 (17.3 %)	23 (19.7 %)	
21-25 students	6 (0.9 %)	3 (4.0 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Missing value	115 (16.5 %)			
Total	699 (100.0 %)	75 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 13 indicates that during the research period, the most common class size of English classes in kindergartens was between 21 and 25 students. There were also English classes with more than 26 students. Are the class sizes too big? What are the opinions of the subjects?

Table 14 shows that the opinions of kindergarten teachers, kindergarten directors, Chinese English teachers, and foreign English teachers concerning the optimal class size are the same. The most frequently chosen item regarding class size in the questionnaires is “between 10 to 15 students”. If the class size is too big, it is difficult to allow every student the opportunity to practice individually. Most English teachers desire classes of under 15 students. However, from table 13 we can see that more than 70 % of English classes ($33.3\% + 35.9\% + 4.3\%$) have more than 16 students. This presents a problem in kindergarten English classes.

6.3.3.4 What language is used in kindergarten English classes during the research period and what is the optimal one?

Table 15: What language is used in kindergartens' English classes?

	Chinese English teachers		Foreign English teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
All in English, no Chinese	10	8.5 %	19	86.4 %
Most in English, with a bit of Chinese	75	64.1 %	3	13.6 %
Sometimes in English, sometimes in Chinese	28	23.9 %		
Missing value	4	3.4		
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100.0 %

Table 16: What is the optimal language to be used in kindergarten English classes?

	kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers
All in English, no Chinese	10 (13.3%)	85 (12.2 %)	12 (10.3 %)
Most in English, with a bit of Chinese	47 (62.7 %)	468 (67.0 %)	86 (73.5 %)
Most in Chinese	1 (1.3 %)	6 (0.9 %)	
Sometimes in English, sometimes in Chinese	17 (22.7 %)	136 (19.5 %)	17 (14.5 %)
Missing value		4 (0.6 %)	2 (1.7 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)

Table 15 indicates that while most foreign English teachers (86.4 %) use only English in class, only 8.5 % of Chinese English teachers use only English in class. Most Chinese English teachers (64.1 %) use a limited amount of Chinese in class to explain certain concepts. If English teachers use mostly English in class, it provides a good opportunity for children to practice their listening comprehension skills. Table 15 indicates that 23.9 % of Chinese English teachers sometimes use English and sometimes use Chinese in class.

Table 16 indicates that most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers are of the opinion that kindergarten English classes are beneficial when the majority of the class is conducted in English, with Chinese used only to offer explanations of particular ideas. According to most of the subjects, it is easier for students to understand if the English teachers use a bit of Chinese. Only about 10 % of kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers believe that it is best to conduct English only classes.

I am of the opinion that it is optimal to use English only in kindergarten English classes. Due to the reasons mentioned in chapter 3.3 and through my observations of English classes for young children, I strongly believe that using only English is the best way to teach kindergarten children English.

Kindergarten children have yet to establish a comprehensive vocabulary in their first language. Some words which the English teachers want to teach their students, the children have yet to learn in Chinese. Therefore, it is fruitless to use some Chinese explanations for kindergarten children. It is better to show them concrete objects. If the children learn the words directly in English, they can

memorize the English words better and when they want to use the words, they can speak the words automatically without having to translate from Chinese to English.

6.3.3.5 Who teaches in kindergarten English classes?

Table 17: Who teaches in English classes during the research period?

	Frequency	Percent
Only Chinese English teachers	38	50.7 %
Only foreign English teachers	5	6.7 %
Because of a different price, some English classes are taught by a foreign teacher, some by a Chinese English teacher	2	2.7 %
Sometimes by foreign, sometimes by Chinese English teacher	26	34.7 %
Missing value	4	5.3 %
Total	75	100.0 %

The data of table 17 is from questionnaires of kindergarten directors. From table 17, we can see that most kindergartens (50.7 %) have only Chinese English teachers and, therefore, their English classes are all taught by Chinese English teachers. On the contrary, 6.7 % of kindergartens have English classes taught solely by foreign English teachers. One of the reasons that so few kindergartens employ foreign English teachers is the inability of the kindergartens to provide teachers with a working visa / alien resident card. Due to the laws in Taiwan, foreign English teachers may only apply for an ARC through a cram school. This law needs to be changed so that foreign English teachers can legally work in

kindergartens.

Besides the kindergartens which only have Chinese English teachers or only have foreign English teachers, there are 34.7 % of kindergartens whose English classes are taught by foreign English teachers and Chinese English teachers. Most of these English classes are divided so that one day per week is taught by a foreign English teacher and the rest of the days are taught by a Chinese English teacher. This type of class can be satisfactory if both teachers are well qualified.

Table 17 reveals that there are 2.7 % of kindergartens in which some English classes are taught by foreign English teachers and some by Chinese English teachers because of a different price. If the parents choose the English classes which were taught by foreign English teachers, the tuition is more expensive than in the classes which are taught by Chinese English teachers.

The text above concerns the conditions of the kindergartens during the research period. In the following text, we will address the opinions of the subjects about the most suitable nationality of kindergarten English teachers.

Table 18: What nationality is optimal for a kindergarten English teacher?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Native speaker of English	9 (12.0%)	73 (10.4 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Chinese English teacher	5 (6.7 %)	65 (9.3 %)	19 (16.2 %)	
Both together in class	42 (56 %)	375 (53.6 %)	53 (45.3 %)	19 (86.4 %)
Either one	19 (25.3 %)	180 (25.8 %)	43 (36.8 %)	3 (13.6 %)
Missing value		6 (0.9 %)		
Total	75 (100 %)	699 (100 %)	117 (100 %)	22 (100 %)

What nationality is best for a kindergarten English teacher? Some people prefer foreign English teachers because they hope the children can learn to speak the language as native speakers do. Some people prefer Chinese English teachers so that the teacher can explain concepts in Chinese when needed. Some people do not care whether the English class is taught by foreign English teachers or by Chinese English teachers.

Table 18 indicates that the most frequently chosen item to this question is “both foreign English teachers and Chinese English teachers together in class”.

However, if both foreign English teachers and Chinese English teachers teach together concurrently in one class, it will be too expensive for most kindergartens. As far as I am aware, there are no kindergartens in Kaohsiung which employ this system. I am of the opinion that it is not necessary for both foreign and Chinese English teachers to teach in one class at the same time. As I

have mentioned above, I believe that for young learners it is best for the English teachers to use only English to explain concepts and vocabulary. I do not think there should be a Chinese English teacher in the classroom to offer Chinese explanations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is unnecessary to teach grammar to kindergarten children and it is better to teach them only in English. Therefore, it is unnecessary to have both foreign and Chinese English teachers together in the classroom at the same time.

6.3.3.6 Teaching materials

Table 19: Do you think it is necessary to use a textbook in kindergarten English classes?

	kindergarten director	Kindergarten teacher	Chinese English teacher	foreign English teacher
Yes, it is necessary.	59 (78.7 %)	500 (71.5 %)	91 (77.8 %)	13 (59.1 %)
No, it is not necessary.	12 (16.0 %)	181 (25.9 %)	24 (20.5 %)	9 (40.9 %)
Missing value	4 (5.3 %)	18 (2.6 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

The majority of the subjects believe it is necessary to use a textbook in kindergarten English classes. There are many advantages to using textbooks. To begin with, textbook pictures help children to memorize what they have learned in class. With textbooks, parents can see what their children have learned in English class. Having a textbook assists parents when reviewing with their children at home. If children have textbooks and the tapes of the textbooks, they can listen to the tapes and read the textbooks at home when reviewing.

Secondly, children enjoy looking at pictures. Most textbooks for children have many pictures. If the pictures in the textbooks are stimulating, children may be interested enough to read their textbooks at home, or even to show their parents how to say the words related to the pictures.

Thirdly, if English teachers ask children to point to the words when they read the text in English class, it helps children to recognize words. I would like to use my niece Sandy as an example. Sandy's English teacher always asks his students to point to the words while they are reading their texts in English class. When Sandy reads her textbooks at home, she also points to the words and reads the text fluently. My sister and I are amazed that Sandy, at the age of four and a half, can recognize so many words.

Table 20: Do you use teaching material for English classes in this kindergarten?

	Frequency	Percent
No	4	5.3 %
Yes. The teaching materials are bought from the store	61	81.3 %
Yes. The teaching materials are edited by the teacher himself/herself	5	6.7 %
Missing value	5	6.7 %
Total	75	100.0 %

Table 21: What kind of teaching material do you think is better for kindergarten English classes?

	Chinese English teacher		Foreign English teacher	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
From the foreign market	30	25.6 %	9	40.9 %
The teacher compiled by him-/herself	1	0.9 %	4	18.2 %
Local experts compiled for local students	65	55.6 %	3	13.6 %
Mixed the books of foreign market, local experts and teacher	9	7.7 %	3	13.6 %
Missing value	12	10.3 %	3	13.6 %
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100.0 %

Table 20 shows that most kindergartens use teaching materials in their English classes. Only 5.3 % of them do not use any teaching materials. Most of the kindergartens (81.3 %) utilized English teaching materials from the store, while only 6.7 % of kindergartens use teaching materials compiled by the teacher him/herself.

As mentioned above, most English classes in Taiwanese kindergartens are organized by language institutes, which also publish teaching materials. Kindergartens usually ask students to buy their textbooks and tapes. Through my classroom observation and my discussions with English teachers, I know that some English teachers do not ask students to bring textbooks to English class. The textbook is merely for students to conduct review at home. English teachers teach according to the textbook. When parents want to help their children do the

review at home and listen to the tape, the textbook is helpful. Some textbooks also include the text of songs so that parents can help their children sing the songs correctly and remember the lyrics of the songs. English songs are a fun and effective method for learning English.

The research results indicate that the majority of the people involved in teaching English in Taiwanese kindergartens believe that it is better to use teaching materials in class. We now turn to the question of what kind of teaching material will be the most effective for kindergarten children. Table 21 shows that most Chinese English teachers (55.6 %) prefer teaching materials which are compiled by local experts. Many academic articles in Taiwan state that many English teachers in Taiwan insist that teaching materials from the foreign market are unsuitable for Taiwanese students. Many Chinese English teachers believe that teaching materials compiled by local experts for local students are best for teachers and students (Pan 1997: 18 / Tsai Zu-chuan 1999: 3).

Table 21 indicates that only 25.6 % of Chinese English teachers and 40.9 % of foreign English teachers believe that teaching materials from foreign markets are preferable to those from local markets. I personally prefer teaching materials from foreign markets. Many bookstores in Taiwan sell a multitude of English teaching materials and there are many interesting and entertaining teaching materials from foreign markets that are aimed specifically at young children. Utilizing foreign teaching materials allows students a glimpse into western culture and customs. A knowledge of the country in which the language being learned is spoken can promote interest and enthusiasm in the learner.

6.3.3.7 What teaching method is used in English classes?

Table 22: What teaching method is used in your English class?

	Chinese English teacher		Foreign English teacher	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Total or partial immersion	0	0 %	4	18.2 %
Silent way	1	0.9 %	0	0 %
the direct method	18	15.4 %	1	4.5 %
Whole language	4	3.4 %	3	13.6 %
Total physical response (TPR)	28	23.9 %	8	36.4 %
Communicative language teaching	4	3.4 %	0	0 %
no teaching method is used	22	18.8 %	0	0 %
Total physical response + communicative language teaching	6	5.1 %	0	0 %
the direct method + total physical response	19	16.2 %	0	0 %
the direct method + total physical response + communicative language teaching	7	6.0 %	0	0 %
Immersion, total physical response, and communicative		0 %	6	27.3 %
Missing value	8	6.8 %	0	0 %
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100 %

Only English teachers were asked this question. Table 22 indicates that Total Physical Response (TPR) is the most frequently utilized teaching method by both Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers. 23.9 % of Chinese

English teachers and 36.4 % of foreign English teachers use this method. Some English teachers use more than one teaching method; 16.2 % of Chinese English teachers use both “direct method” and “Total Physical Response”, 27.3% of foreign English teachers use ”immersion”, “Total Physical Response”, and the “communicative teaching method” together. As mentioned in chapter 4, there are advantages to using more than one teaching method in class.

18.8 % of Chinese English teachers answer “no teaching method is used.” I think that is because some English teachers do not know or care which teaching method they are employing. This is not to say that the teachers who know the theories of teaching methods are good teachers, but knowing these theories can help English teachers improve their instruction.

6.3.3.8 The aim of kindergarten English classes

Table 23: What is the aim of the English class in your kindergarten?

	kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
To introduce foreign language to children and to make the initial learning experience pleasurable. Good learning in English is not expected.	41 (54.7 %)	403 (57.7 %)	50 (42.7 %)	
To let students have fun in learning English and hope that pupils can achieve a proficient level of English.	33 (44.0 %)	272 (38.9 %)	61 (52.1 %)	18 (81.8 %)
Missing value	1 (1.3 %)	24 (3.4 %)	6 (5.1 %)	4 (18.2 %)
Total	75 (100 %)	699 (100 %)	117 (100 %)	22 (100 %)

Through my questionnaire, I tried to determine what the aim of kindergarten English classes was during the research period. Moreover, I would like to ascertain what the subjects believe would be the optimal English class. Table 23 provides the subjects with two options:

1. The kindergarten simply wants to introduce foreign language to children and to make the initial learning experience pleasurable. Good learning in English is not expected.
2. Good quality English classes are offered and it is hoped that pupils can have

fun and can achieve a proficient level of English.

Table 23 reveals the aim of kindergarten English classes during the research period. The data indicates that most kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers believe English classes in their kindergartens are for introducing foreign language to children, and to let them have fun in learning English; good learning in English is not expected. On the contrary, according to most English teachers (52.1 % of Chinese English teachers and 81.8 % of foreign English teachers), the aim of their English classes is to let pupils achieve a proficient level of English and to have fun learning.

According to most kindergarten directors, they just want children to have fun, therefore the amount of time the child studies English is very limited in many kindergartens. I believe it is impossible to achieve a sufficient level of English for most kindergartens because of oversized classes and limited time allotments. Only the few kindergartens which offer English classes of more than two hours per day for 5 days per week, can achieve this aim.

Table 24 asks, according to the subjects' opinion, what is the best method in which to study English?

Table 24: What is your opinion? What kind of kindergartens' English class is better?

	Opinions of kindergarten directors	Opinions of kindergarten teachers	Opinions of Chinese English teachers	Opinions of foreign English teachers
To introduce foreign language to children and to make the initial learning experience pleasurable. Good learning in English is not expected.	38 (50.7 %)	446 (63.8 %)	58 (49.6 %)	
To let students have fun in learning English and hope that pupils can achieve a proficient level of English.	35 (46.7 %)	223 (31.9 %)	49 (41.9 %)	18 (81.8 %)
Missing value	2 (2.7 %)	30 (4.3 %)	10 (8.5 %)	4 (18.2 %)
Total	75 (100 %)	699 (100 %)	117 (100 %)	22 (100 %)

Most kindergarten directors and teachers believe that kindergarten English classes should be structured so that children have fun. Good learning in English is not expected. For the most part, Chinese English teachers share the same feelings as kindergarten directors and teachers.

On the contrary, most foreign English teachers believe kindergartens should offer quality education so that students achieve a proficient level of English while still having fun. This aim is hard to realize because of oversized classes and limited time allotment. If these conditions are improved, maybe this goal can be fulfilled in the future.

6.3.3.9 Problems in kindergarten English classes

What problems are there in kindergarten English classes?

To this question eight choices are provided. The subjects can choose more than one answer and write numbers in front of the answers according to their importance. Frequency and percentage are shown in table 25. All four groups of subjects are calculated together in the following table as well.

Table 25: What problems are there in kindergarten English classes?

Choice item	Frequency	Percent	Order
Lack of teaching aids in kindergarten	612	11.3 %	8
Lack of appropriate teaching material	637	11.8 %	4
The class size is too big	755	14 %	2
The class periods per week are too few.	636	11.8 %	5
Parents do not help their children do the review.	823	15.2 %	1
Students are not interested in learning English.	617	11.4 %	7
English teachers lack of training in methodology and teaching with games.	704	13 %	3
Lack of teachers who are native speakers of English.	618	11.4 %	6

Table 25 indicates, according to the order of frequency and percentage, the most serious problem in kindergarten English classes is “parents do not help their children do the review”. “Class size is too big” is the second most serious problem. The third most serious problem is “English teachers lack of training in

methodology and teaching with games”.

Table 26 indicates the order according to medium.

Table 26: What problems are there in kindergarten English classes?

Choice item	Medium	Order
Lack of teaching aids in kindergarten	4.63	6
Lack of appropriate teaching material	4.28	5
The class size is too big	3.0	2
The class periods per week are too few.	3.78	4
Parents do not help their children do the review.	2.94	1
Students are not interested in learning English.	4.71	7
English teachers lack of training in methodology and teaching with games.	3.55	3
Lack of teachers who are native speakers of English.	5.0	8

According to medium, the order of the three most serious problems is the same order as in table 25. “Parents do not help their children do the review” is again the most serious concern with a medium of 2.94. “The class size is too big” is the second most serious problem with a medium of 3. While “English teachers lack of training in methodology and teaching with games”, and “the class periods per week are too few” are third and fourth respectively.

6.3.3.10 What are the factors that influence learning English effectively?

It is important to know what are the factors that influence learning English effectively. To this question, I offer eight choice items.

Table 27: What are the factors that influence learning English effectively?

Choice item	Frequency (Percentage)	Order
A quality teacher	857 (13.87 %)	2
Good teaching material	786 (12.72 %)	4
Interesting teaching methods	874 (14.14 %)	1
Help of the parents to review	772(12.5 %)	5
Watching English video films often	689 (11.15 %)	7
Listening to tape often	725 (11.73 %)	6
The language talent of the children	681 (11.02 %)	8
The interest of the children to English	795 (12.87 %)	3

Table 27 indicates that “interesting teaching methods” is, according to the opinion of the subjects, the most important factor that influences the effect of English learning. The second most important factor is “a quality teacher”. It is obvious that, “interesting teaching methods”, is directly tied to “a quality teacher”. From that, we can see how important it is to have a good English teacher.

The third factor of effective learning is “the interest of the children to English”. The fourth and fifth factors are “good teaching material” and “help of parents do

the review”. According to the opinions of the subjects, the least important factor is “the language talent of the children”.

Table 28 shows the medium response of the subjects with regard to table 27.

Table 28: What are the factors that influence learning English effectively?

Choice item	Medium	Order
A quality teacher	2.84	3
Good teaching materials	4.1	4
Interesting teaching methods	2.25	1
Help of the parents to review	4.7	5
Watching English video films often	6.1	8
Listening to tape often	5.38	6
The language talent of the children	5.74	7
The interest of the children to English	2.83	2

According to medium “interesting teaching methods”, with a medium of 2.25, is the most important factor. “The interest of the children to English” with a medium of 2.83, is the second most important factor, while “a quality teacher” and “good teaching materials” are the third and fourth most important factors respectively.

6.3.3.11 The opinions of kindergarten directors regarding government subsidy

Table 29: Question to kindergarten directors: Do you hope that the government will subsidize kindergarten English classes?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	86.7 %
No	5	6.7 %
Missing value	5	6.7 %
Total	75	100.0 %

Table 29 indicates that most kindergarten directors (86.7 %) hope that the government will subsidize kindergarten English classes. If the government subsidizes kindergarten English classes, it can help children from poor families to be educated in English. With this subsidy, kindergartens can offer more English classes. Therefore, children's learning results may also be improved.

Hopefully the government may help kindergarten English classes not only with money, but also in the areas of teaching materials, and in English teacher's education and training.

6.3.4 Qualifications and educational and training background of Chinese and foreign English teachers

In the following text, I will analyze the educational and training background of English teachers. Then I will analyze the opinions regarding English teachers' qualifications.

Table 31: Educational background of Chinese English teachers

	Frequency	Percent
Major in English	65	55.6 %
Non-English major	34	29.1 %
Missing value	18	15.4 %
Total	117	100.0 %

The open-ended questions in my questionnaires showed that all Chinese English teachers have at least a college education. Table 31 presents the results concerning Chinese English teachers' educational backgrounds. The data indicates that most Chinese English teachers (55.6 %) were English majors. Non-English majors were only 29.1 %. The open-ended questions in my questionnaires also showed that six English teachers, among the 117, obtained their highest degree in colleges or universities of English speaking countries.

The questionnaires of the foreign English teachers showed that kindergarten foreign English teachers are either college or university graduates. Their majors in university or college are varied, e.g. English, education, communication, German, sociology, psychology, etc.

After looking at the educational background of the English teachers, I will look at their teaching and training experiences.

Table 32: Question to Chinese English teachers: Have you ever taught children English before you taught in a kindergarten?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	89	76.1 %
No	22	18.8 %
Missing value	6	5.1 %
Total	117	100.0 %

Table 32 indicates that most Chinese English teachers (76.1 %) had taught children English before they taught in a kindergarten. That experience can help their kindergarten teaching. However, there are differences between the methods of teaching elementary school children and teaching kindergarten children.

Elementary school students in Taiwan are between 6 and 12 years old.

Kindergarten children are between 3 to 6 years old. The games used to teach kindergarten children are different from the games for elementary school children because of age differences. In addition, for elementary school children, English teachers use more word expression and sometimes explain in Chinese to help the students understand. For kindergarten children, the English teachers use more gestures, pictures and concrete objects.

It would be helpful for English teachers to have experience teaching elementary school children, but they should receive training in teaching kindergarten

children.

Table 33: Question to foreign English teachers: Had you taught children English before you came to Taiwan?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	7	31.8 %
No	15	68.2 %
Total	22	100.0 %

From the subjects, only 31.8 % of foreign English teachers had taught children English before they came to Taiwan. Most of them (68.2 %) did not have experience teaching children English before. If the foreign English teachers already have teaching experience in their own countries, it will be easier for them to teach in Taiwanese kindergartens because they know how to get along with children. I believe that whether they have taught children in their countries or not, they need to be trained in Taiwan. Otherwise, they will gradually have to gather experience themselves after they have taught for one or two years.

Table 34: Have you been trained to teach children English?

	Chinese English teachers		Foreign English teachers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	5	4.3 %	12	54.5 %
Yes, I was trained in this kindergarten.	2	1.7 %	2	9.1 %
Yes, I was trained in other kindergartens, cram schools or language institutes.	106	90.6 %	4	18.2 %
Missing value	4	3.4 %	4	18.2 %
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100.0 %

Table 34 indicates that while most Chinese English teachers (1.7 % + 90.6 % = 92.3 %) have been trained in teaching children English, only 4.3 % of them have **not** been trained. Most Chinese English teachers are teachers in language institutes where they received their training.

The data in table 34 also shows that only two Chinese English teachers received training in the kindergarten where they teach. The other Chinese English teachers were trained elsewhere. The kindergarten, where these two Chinese English teachers teach and received training, is a kindergarten which belongs to a language cram school chain. Therefore, the kindergarten has a person to train their English teachers. Other kindergartens are unable to provide that.

Differing from Chinese English teachers, most **foreign English teachers** (54.5 %) have not been trained to teach young children English. Undoubtedly, if they have been trained, they can teach better. What the government should take into consideration is how to train all English teachers and how to assure the foreign English teachers that there is job security, so that they would like to teach in kindergartens for many years.

Table 35: How long have you been teaching English in kindergarten?

	Chinese English teachers		Foreign English teachers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than one year	29	24.8 %	12	54.5 %
one to two years	15	12.8 %	1	4.5 %
two to three years	17	14.5 %	3	13.6 %
more than three years	52	44.4 %	6	27.3 %
Missing value	4	3.4 %		
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100.0 %

Through my questionnaire I established whether English teachers would continue to teach in kindergartens for many years or if they would rather work somewhere else. Table 35 indicates that many Chinese English teachers (44.4 %) have been teaching English in kindergartens for more than three years. Because teaching experience helps English teachers to improve their teaching, this has created a positive situation in Taiwanese kindergartens.

Table 35 also shows that 24.8 % of Chinese English teachers have been teaching

English in kindergartens for less than one year. When Chinese English teachers are beginning to teach in kindergartens, they are still adjusting to the job. Some of them may find that they do not like to teach in kindergartens because the children are very noisy. Some of them would prefer working in a trading company or somewhere else. People who have been teaching in kindergartens for one or two years, have more interest in teaching kindergarten children and will continue to teach English in kindergartens.

Table 35 reveals that most foreign English teachers (54.5 %) have been teaching in kindergartens for less than one year. This means that most of them only teach in kindergartens for a short time, then they leave Taiwan or they change jobs. This is a pity because teachers need experience to make their teaching better. From this, we can also gather that kindergartens lack experienced foreign English teachers. The government needs to establish laws to allow foreign English teachers to legally teach in kindergartens and to encourage them to remain in kindergartens longer.

6.3.5 Opinions about qualified English teachers

In this section I will discuss what qualifications a kindergarten English teacher should have. First of all, I will analyze the opinions of the qualifications a Chinese English teacher should have. Then, I will discuss the qualifications a foreign English teacher should have.

What qualifications should a Chinese English teacher have?

To this question I gave six choices in my questionnaires. The six choices were:

1. Major in English
2. Correct pronunciation
3. Fluency in English, but not necessarily with a major in English
4. Appropriate training in teaching English to children
5. Familiarity with child psychology
6. Desire to continue educating him-/herself

The results of the questionnaires are as follows:

What qualifications should a Chinese English teacher have?

Table 36: Major in English

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	41 (54.7 %)	268 (38.3 %)	28 (23.9 %)	
No	34 (45.3 %)	431 (61.7 %)	89 (76.1 %)	22 (100.0 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 37: Correct pronunciation

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	65 (86.7 %)	583 (83.4 %)	102 (87.2 %)	18 (81.8 %)
No	10 (13.3 %)	116 (16.6%)	15 (12.8 %)	4 (18.2 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 38: Fluency in English, but not necessarily with a major in English

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	foreign English teachers
Yes	21 (28 %)	140 (20.0 %)	60 (51.3 %)	15 (68.2 %)
No	53 (70.7)	559 (80.0 %)	57 (48.7 %)	7 (31.8 %)
Missing value	1 (1.3 %)			
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 39: Appropriate training in teaching English to children

	kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	foreign English teachers
Yes	69 (92.0 %)	636 (91.0 %)	100 (85.5 %)	13 (59.1 %)
No	6 (8.0 %)	63 (9.0 %)	17 (14.5 %)	9 (40.9 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 40: Familiarity with child psychology

	kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	foreign English teachers
Yes	54 (72 %)	532 (76.1 %)	77 (65.8 %)	13 (59.1 %)
No	21 (28 %)	167 (23.9 %)	40 (34.2 %)	9 (40.9 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 41: Desire to continue educating him-/herself

	kindergarten directors	kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	foreign English teachers
Yes	60 (80.0 %)	506 (72.4 %)	108 (92.3 %)	9 (40.9 %)
No	15 (20.0 %)	193 (27.6 %)	9 (7.7 %)	13 (59.1 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 36 indicates that besides kindergarten directors, most subjects do not care whether a Chinese English teacher was an English major or not. Whether a Chinese English teacher teaches well, does not have much to do with whether he or she was an English major.

From table 37 to table 41, we can see that according to the opinions of most subjects, a Chinese English teacher should have the following four qualities: correct pronunciation, appropriate training in teaching English to children, familiarity with child psychology, and a desire to continue educating him-/herself.

The data also shows that “correct pronunciation” and “appropriate training in teaching English to children” are perceived as the most important qualifications a Chinese English teacher should have.

What qualifications should a foreign English teacher have?

Table 42: Should a foreign English teacher be a native speaker of English?

	Kindergarten directors	kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	47 (62.7 %)	337 (48.2 %)	66 (56.4 %)	12 (54.5 %)
No	27 (36.0 %)	360 (51.5 %)	49 (41.9 %)	10 (45.5 %)
Missing value	1 (1.3 %)		2 (1.7 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 43: Should a foreign English teacher have good pronunciation?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	71 (94.7 %)	603 (86.3 %)	102 (87.2 %)	19 (86.4 %)
No	3 (4.0 %)	94 (13.4 %)	15 (12.8 %)	3 (13.6 %)
Missing value	1 (1.3 %)	2 (0.3 %)		
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 44: Should a foreign English teacher be well trained in teaching children English?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	72 (96.0 %)	662 (94.7 %)	104 (88.9 %)	17 (77.3 %)
No	2 (2.7 %)	35 (5.0 %)	13 (11.1 %)	5 (22.7 %)
Missing value	1 (1.3 %)	2 (0.3 %)		
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 45: Should a foreign English teacher be familiar with child psychology?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	65 (86.7 %)	568 (81.3 %)	86 (73.5 %)	12 (54.5 %)
No	10 (13.3 %)	129 (18.4 %)	31 (26.5 %)	10 (45.5 %)
Missing value		2 (0.3 %)		
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 46: Should a foreign English teacher desire to continue educating him-/herself?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	59 (78.6 %)	483 (69.1 %)	104 (88.9 %)	9 (40.9 %)
No	16 (21.3 %)	214 (30.6 %)	13 (11.1 %)	13 (59.1 %)
Missing value		2 (0.3 %)		
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	00.0 %)

After looking at the qualifications of Chinese English teachers, I will examine the qualifications a foreign English teacher should have. In my questionnaires I gave five choices. The five choices were:

1. Should a foreign English teacher be a native speaker of English?
2. Should a foreign English teacher have good pronunciation?
3. Should a foreign English teacher be well trained in teaching children English?
4. Should a foreign English teacher be familiar with child psychology?
5. Should a foreign English teacher desire to continue educating him-/herself?

Table 42 shows the results to the question of whether a foreign English teacher should be an English speaker. According to the opinions of most kindergarten directors, Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers, a foreign English teacher should be a native English speaker. Although 51.5% of kindergarten teachers are not of the opinion that a foreign English teacher should be a native English speaker, 48.2 % of them believe that a foreign English teacher should be a native English speaker.

From my questionnaires, I found out that the foreign English teachers who are not from English speaking countries feel that being a native English speaker is unnecessary for teaching English in Taiwanese kindergartens.

I agree that a foreign English teacher should be a native English speaker and should speak with clear and correct pronunciation. Hiring foreigners who are non-native English speakers can pose many problems for schools. Most people

who learn a new language cannot speak it perfectly. The influence of their first language is usually evident in their pronunciation of the second. For example, native French speakers who teach English will obviously do so with a French accent. If kindergartens must employ non-native English speakers, their needs would best be served by hiring a Chinese English teacher with a high degree of competence in English.

Many kindergartens like to have foreign English teachers just because they want to show parents that they have **foreign** English teachers. Most parents will not ask whether the foreign English teacher teaches well or whether he or she is a native English speaker. If the teacher has the different hair and skin coloring of a foreigner, most parents will not question their teaching credentials.

From tables 43, 44 and table 45, we can see that almost all four subject groups agree that accurate pronunciation, through EFL (English as a Foreign Language) training, and familiarity with child psychology are important for a foreign English teacher. These are the same desired qualifications as those for Chinese English teachers.

Tables 41 and 46 indicate that most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers believe that an English teacher should desire to continue educating him-/herself. While 40.9 % of foreign English teachers believe that a “desire to continue educating him-/herself” is a desirable quality for an English teacher, 59.1 % of them do not agree. I am of the opinion that English teachers should desire to continue to educate themselves, especially, to improve their teaching methods and learn more games and songs to use in

English classes. I think Chinese and foreign English teachers need to be trained throughout their teaching tenure. There are always new teaching methods, songs and games to be utilized. English teachers should desire to improve their teaching. Chinese English teachers should also educate themselves further in order to make progress in their English competence. It is wrong to think that people do not require adequate English competence in order to be a kindergarten English teacher. The more accomplished the teacher is in all forms of the language, the better they will teach.

Many kindergarten teachers and kindergarten directors believe that foreign English teachers should be able to speak Chinese. Many kindergarten teachers and kindergarten directors require this because most of them do not speak English. Therefore, they find it is difficult to communicate with foreign English teachers, especially when they have something important to discuss. For the purpose of communicating with kindergarten teachers and kindergarten directors, it seems necessary that foreign English teachers speak Chinese. However, for the purpose of teaching young children English, I do not think that speaking Chinese is a necessity. If kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers could improve their English, it would be a better solution to the communication difficulties they encounter with foreign teachers.

6.3.6 English teachers' opinions about training

In this section, I will try to ascertain how important teacher training is. After that, I will discuss what should be included in the training.

Table 47: Do you think training of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers is necessary?

	Choices of Chinese English teachers		Choices of foreign English teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	113	96.6 %	20	90.9 %
No			2	9.1 %
Missing value	4	3.4 %		
Total	117	100.0 %	22	100.0 %

Table 47 shows that besides 4 missing value, all Chinese English teachers believe that training is needed for English teachers. Most foreign English teachers (90.9 %) also believe that training is necessary.

From the questionnaires, I found out that the two foreign English teachers who chose “no” to this question had not been trained to teach children English. They may have this opinion because they have not participated in any teacher training, so they can hardly imagine how important it is or what an English teacher can learn from the training.

One foreign English teacher chose “yes” to this question in my questionnaire and

wrote “definitely” beside the answer yes. I absolutely agree with him. I taught English in two different cram schools in the past and received training there. From my experience, I believe training is very helpful. I received training from different trainers and was taught about how to praise children, how to make children concentrate in class, classroom management, and different games and songs for children. During the training, I also observed other experienced teachers in order to learn their teaching methods, due to their unique personalities and different teaching experiences. From their different teaching styles, I chose what was appropriate for me to incorporate into my own teaching style.

I think training is not only necessary, but should take place regularly, on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. Sometimes new teachers may encounter some problems in their English classes and they will not know how to solve the problems themselves. Regular training offers them the opportunity to consult experienced teachers and find solutions to their problems.

Since training is very important, I will take a look at what should be included in training, in the following section.

Question: What do you think should be included in the training of EFL teachers?

To this question, I gave three choices in my questionnaires:

1. pronunciation

2. games and English songs
3. teaching methods
4. English conversation
5. Others

Table 48: What should be included in the training? (multiple-choice item)

Item		Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Pronunciation	Choose	111 (94.9 %)	16 (72.7 %)
	Not choose	6 (5.1 %)	6 (27.3 %)
Teaching methods	Choose	107 (91.4 %)	22 (100.0 %)
	Not choose	10 (8.5 %)	
Games and English songs	Choose	101 (86.3 %)	22 (100.0 %)
	Not choose	16 (13.7 %)	
English conversation	Choose	93 (79.5 %)	21 (95.5 %)
	Not choose	24 (20.5 %)	1 (4.5 %)

Table 48 indicates that both Chinese English teachers and foreign English teachers have similar opinions that all of the four items should be included in training. Among the four choices, pronunciation, with 94.9 %, is the most frequently chosen item by Chinese English teachers. “Teaching methods” and “games and songs”, with 100 %, are the two most frequently chosen items by foreign English teachers.

Besides the four items, what else should be included in the training for English teachers? Some Chinese English teachers suggested that “how to make teaching aids”, “how to manage the class” and “child psychology” should also be included in the training. I agree with that. Many English teachers have to make teaching aids themselves. Therefore, it would be helpful if “how to make teaching aids” was included in the training. “How to manage the class” is also important, as the first step of teaching is to gain and maintain student’s interest and attention.

Besides discipline, the suggestions of foreign English teachers to this question are somewhat different from the suggestions of Chinese English teachers. The suggestions of some foreign English teachers are: discipline, phonics and Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques.

6.3.7 What should be taught in kindergarten English classes?

In my questionnaires, there were ten items to this question that could be chosen:

1. the 26 English letters
2. kk
3. phonics
4. grammar
5. easy conversation
6. English songs
7. reading easy stories
8. games
9. pattern practice
10. look at pictures and make sentences

The opinions of the four groups of subjects to these ten items are shown in table 49:

Table 49: What should be included in kindergarten English classes?

Item		Opinion of kindergarten directors	Opinion of kindergarten teachers	Opinion of Chinese English teachers	Opinion of foreign English teachers
The 26 English letters	Choose	62 (82.7 %)	509 (72.8 %)	109 (93.2 %)	21 (95.5 %)
	Not choose	13 (17.3 %)	190 (27.2 %)	8 (6.8 %)	1 (4.5 %)
Kk	Choose	6 (8.0 %)	127 (18.2 %)	10 (8.5 %)	
	Not choose	69 (92.0 %)	572 (81.8 %)	107 (91.5 %)	22 (100.0 %)
Phonics	Choose	57 (76.0 %)	483 (69.1 %)	106 (90.6 %)	18 (81.8 %)
	Not choose	18 (24 %)	216 (30.9 %)	11 (9.4 %)	4 (18.2 %)
Grammar	Choose	2 (2.7 %)	35 (5.0 %)	2 (1.7 %)	6 (27.3 %)
	Not choose	73 (97.3 %)	664 (95.0 %)	115 (98.3 %)	16 (72.7 %)
Easy conversation	Choose	68 (90.7%)	581 (83.1 %)	111 (94.9 %)	16 (72.7 %)
	Not choose	7 (9.3 %)	118 (16.9 %)	6 (5.1 %)	6 (27.3 %)
English songs	Choose	69 (92.0 %)	636 (91.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	21 (95.5 %)
	Not choose	6 (8.0 %))	63 (9.0 %)		1 (4.5 %)
Easy stories	Choose	23 (30.7 %)	99 (14.2 %)	21 (17.9 %)	15 (68.2 %)
	Not choose	52 (69.3 %)	600 (85.8 %)	96 (82.1 %)	7 (31.8 %)
Games	Choose	66 (88.0 %)	641 (91.7 %)	109 (93.2 %)	18 (81.8 %)
	Not choose	9 (12.0 %)	58 (8.3 %)	8 (6.8 %)	4 (18.2 %)
Pattern practice	Choose	25 (33.3 %)	153 (21.9 %)	76 (65.0 %)	12 (54.5 %)
	Not choose	50 (70.7 %)	546 (78.1 %)	41 (35.0 %)	10 (45.5 %)
Looking at pictures and making sentences	Choose	22 (29.3 %)	144 (20.6 %)	45 (38.5 %)	18 (81.8 %)
	Not choose	53 (70.7 %)	555 (79.4 %)	72 (61.5 %)	4 (18.2 %)

From table 49, we can see that all four groups of subjects share the same opinions. They believe the following five items should be taught in kindergarten English classes:

1. The 26 English letters
2. Phonics
3. Easy conversation
4. English songs
5. Games

All four groups also believe that *kk* and grammar should not be taught in kindergarten English classes. While most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers feel that “easy stories” should not be included in kindergarten English classes, most foreign English teachers believe otherwise. Personally, I agree with foreign English teachers. Young children like to listen to stories. If the storybook has many pictures and few words, it will be interesting and easy for children to understand. Furthermore, if there are numerous words which repeat in the text of easy storybooks, it will be easy for children to remember the meaning of these words because children learn through repetition. Therefore, I think “reading easy stories” is good for young children and it should be included in English classes for young children.

According to the opinions of most kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers, “pattern practice” should not be included in kindergarten English classes. However, according to most Chinese and foreign English teachers because pattern practice should be included. I agree with English teachers,

pattern practice builds a foundation for the development of proper English speech. Some people might be afraid that pattern practice will be too boring for young children. In fact, by employing a few enjoyable games, even the most mundane activity can be fun, especially if your audience is a group of five year old children.

Most foreign English teachers believe that “looking at pictures and making sentences” should be included in kindergarten English classes. However, most kindergarten directors, teachers and Chinese English teachers have the opposite opinion. “Looking at pictures and making sentences” can be taught differently depending on the teacher and the reaction of the students. It could be difficult for Chinese English teachers if their English competence is poor. Clearly, it would be very bad if the teacher makes sentences using improper grammar. On the contrary, for native speaking English teachers, this practice would be quite simple. Therefore, I believe it should be used in kindergarten English classes if the kindergartens have native speaking English teachers.

What should be included in kindergarten English classes?

This question is similar to the question in table 49. Here I attempt to discover what is important in kindergarten English classes. In my questionnaire, I gave eight choice items and asked the subjects to write in numbers in accordance with their importance. “1” means the most important, “2” means second important, etc. While answering this question, the subjects could choose more than one answer. The results of this question are in table 50. In this table, all four groups of subjects are calculated together.

Table 50: What should be included in kindergarten English classes?

Choice Item	Frequency (Percentage)	Order
Conversation	881 (13.64 %)	3
Listening	898 (13.9 %)	1
Reading	739 (11.44 %)	6
Pronunciation	893 (13.82 %)	2
Vocabulary	765 (11.84 %)	5
Grammar	721 (11.16 %)	7
To raise children's interest in English	860 (13.31 %)	4
Education and understanding of British and American culture	704 (10.9 %)	8

Table 50 indicates that “listening” is the most frequently chosen item to the question “what should be included in kindergarten English classes”. The second most frequently chosen item is “pronunciation”. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth most frequently chosen items are “conversation”, “to raise children’s interest in English”, “vocabulary” and “reading”.

“Grammar” and “education and understanding of British and American culture” are the most seldom chosen items. It would appear that according to the opinions of the subjects, these two items are the least important in kindergarten English classes.

Table 50 analyzes frequency and percentage. In the following table, table 51

medium will be addressed.

Table 51: What should be included in the kindergarten English classes?

Choice Item	Medium	Order
Conversation	3.08	4
Listening	2.53	2
Reading	5.44	6
Pronunciation	2.95	3
Vocabulary	5.01	5
Grammar	6.72	8
To raise children's interest in English	1.95	1
Education and understanding of British and American culture	6.4	7

According to the data in table 51, the most important item to be included in English classes is “to raise children’s interest in English”. The medium rests at 1.95. This clearly shows that many people think it is very important. Second, is “listening” with the medium of 2.53. “Pronunciation” comes third, with a medium of 2.95. While the fourth, fifth and sixth choices are “conversation”, “vocabulary” and “reading” respectively, “Grammar” is the least appropriate item to be taught in English classes, having a medium of 6.72.

6.3.8 Homework

Table 52: Do you think it is necessary to give kindergarten children listening homework?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	65 (86.7 %)	544 (77.8 %)	103 (88.0 %)	13 (59.1 %)
No	10 (13.3 %)	143 (20.5 %)	12 (10.3 %)	9 (40.9 %)
Missing value		12 (1.7 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 53: Should kindergarten children be given English writing homework?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	9 (12.0 %)	99 (14.2 %)	23 (9.7 %)	9 (40.9 %)
No	64 (85.3 %)	587 (84.0 %)	94 (80.3 %)	13 (59.1 %)
Necessary for older children.	1 (1.3 %)	2 (0.3 %)		
Missing value	1 (1.3 %)	11 (1.6 %)		
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 52 and 53 reveal the results about giving listening and writing homework to kindergarten children. Most of the subjects believe that it is necessary to give kindergarten children listening homework. However, when it comes to writing homework, most of them believe it is not necessary. Some teachers write in the questionnaires that they think it depends on the age of the children. They think writing homework is not necessary for low grade children (3-year-old children) and middle grade children (4-year-olds), but it might be necessary for upper

grade children (5-year-old children).

I believe **listening** homework is necessary for all kindergarten children. If they listen to their tape at home, they can review what they have learned in kindergarten. That also helps them to memorize English words and sentences. It would also be favorable for the children to listen to their tape recorder many times a day. Once per day is not enough.

With regard to writing homework, I believe it is not necessary for kindergarten children because they have not yet developed the proper motor skills for writing. Listening and speaking are the first two steps for English learning, while recognizing words is the next step. Writing is not as important for kindergarten children.

6.3.9 Parents helping with English review and the expectations they have

Table 54: Do you think parents helping with review aids children in learning English better?

	Kindergarten directors	Kindergarten teachers	Chinese English teachers	Foreign English teachers
Yes	70 (93.3 %)	676 (96.7 %)	113 (96.6 %)	21 (95.5 %)
No	3 (4.0 %)	16 (2.3 %)	2 (1.7 %)	1 (4.5 %)
Missing value	2 (2.7 %)	7 (1 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 54 indicates that most subjects (more than 90 % of the subjects) believe that parents help in doing review may help children learn English better, while only very few people have opposite opinions. With my nieces, I have found reviewing with them to be paramount to their English learning. Even if the parents do not speak English, if they let their children listen to the tape about what they learned in school every day, it helps the children to make progress in English.

Table 55: How often do the parents help their children do English review?

	Opinions of kindergarten teachers	Opinions of Chinese English teachers	Opinions of foreign English teachers
Sometimes	584 (83.5 %)	92 (78.6 %)	7 (31.8 %)
Everyday.	6 (0.9 %)		3 (13.6 %)
Often.	45 (6.4 %)	11 (9.4 %)	6 (27.3 %)
Never	57 (8.2 %)	10 (8.5 %)	3 (13.6 %)
Missing	7 (1.0 %)	4 (3.4 %)	3 (13.6 %)
Total	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

From the text above, we know that most people believe that parents should help their children review because it helps them improve their English. A second question asked was: "How often do the parents help their children do review?" Kindergarten directors were not asked this question because most kindergarten directors in Taiwan do not teach. Therefore, only kindergarten teachers, Chinese and foreign English teachers were asked.

Among the choices of "sometimes", "everyday", "often" and "never", most subjects chose the answer "sometimes". Teachers usually know whether their students have done review at home or not, because if they have done review, they test and perform better in class. It should be noticed that no Chinese English teachers chose "everyday", and only very few kindergarten teachers (0.9 %) chose this item. Moreover, there are very few subjects who believe that parents help their children do English review often. From this, we can discern that a low percentage of kindergarten parents help their children do English review "every

day” or “often”.

Most parents only help their children do English review sometimes. However, I believe that this is not enough. Why don't most parents in Taiwan listen to English cassettes with their children at home? I think, first of all, many married women in Taiwan have occupations. They do not have much time to help their children do English review. This is the same for fathers. Second, many parents either do not speak English or their English pronunciation is not good. If the parents know their English pronunciation is not good, sometimes they will not help their children. These parents can help by listening to the English tape with their children. Not only does it improve the children's English, but the parents as well.

One kindergarten teacher wrote in the questionnaire: “Most parents have high expectations for English classes. However, they do not help their children do review. How can their children learn English well, if they never help their children do review at home?” I can understand that most parents are busy. However, without their help at home, it is hard for a child to learn English well.

Maybe it is just an excuse that most parents say they do not have time. Many people in Taiwan spend a lot of time watching television and going shopping. According to research from Tien-hsia magazine in 1999 (Tien-hsia 2000: 95), 67.2 % of parents in Taiwan accompany their children in watching television every day. Many parents make excuses because they feel tired after work. They prefer watching television or shopping over spending 15 minutes every day to help their children study.

According to my interviews with parents, although they are very busy, some of them help their children review every day. The children of these families learn very well. Without parental support, children are undoubtedly at a disadvantage.

In Taiwan, the mass media often reports that the relationship between parents and their children is becoming increasingly distant. If parents could spend 15 minutes every day to help their children do English review, it could also help improve the relationship between parents and children.

Table 56: Do most parents have a lot of expectations about kindergarten English classes?

	Opinions of kindergarten directors	Opinions of kindergarten teachers	Opinions of Chinese English teachers	Opinions of foreign English teachers
Yes	72 (96.0 %)	495 (70.8 %)	94 (80.3 %)	21 (95.5 %)
No	3 (4.0 %)	195 (20.9 %)	21 (17.9 %)	1 (4.5 %)
Missing value		9 (1.3 %)	2 (1.7 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 57: Do you think current English classes in kindergarten can meet most parents' expectations?

	Opinions of kindergarten directors	Opinions of kindergarten teachers	Opinions of Chinese English teachers	Opinions of foreign English teachers
Yes	63 (84.0 %)	485 (69.4 %)	101 (86.3 %)	6 (27.3 %)
No	9 (12.0 %)	160 (22.9 %)	8 (6.8 %)	13 (59.0 %)
Missing value	3 (4.0 %)	54 (7.7 %)	8 (6.8 %)	3 (13.6 %)
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Table 56 shows that most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and English teachers believe that parents have a lot of expectations about kindergarten English classes. As parents have such high expectations, I also asked: “Can the kindergarten English classes meet most parents’ expectations?” To this question, most kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and Chinese English teachers chose the answer “yes”. However, most foreign English teachers chose the answer “no”. From the viewpoint of foreign English teachers, they do not think that students have learned a sufficient amount of English in kindergartens. Therefore, they believe that kindergarten English classes cannot meet most parents’ expectations.

If parents compare what children learn in English cram schools and in kindergartens, they will know that the learning results in cram schools are better than in kindergartens. This is due, in part, to smaller class sizes and longer class periods in cram schools.

6.3.10 The opinions about students' learning results in kindergarten English classes

Table 58: How are the learning results in kindergarten English classes?

	Opinions of kindergarten directors	Opinions of kindergarten teachers	Opinions of Chinese English teachers	Opinions of foreign English teachers
Good	30 (40.0 %)	215 (30.8 %)	71 (60.7 %)	15 (68.2 %)
Mediocre	41 (54.7 %)	448 (64.1 %)	41 (35.0 %)	7 (31.8 %)
Not good	4 (5.3 %)	28 (4.0 %)	4 (3.4 %)	
Missing value		8 (1.1 %)	1 (0.9 %)	
Total	75 (100.0 %)	699 (100.0 %)	117 (100.0 %)	22 (100.0 %)

Because all private kindergartens in Kaohsiung have English classes, it would be interesting to know whether the students have good learning results in these classes. Table 58 indicates that most kindergarten directors and kindergarten teachers (54.7 % of kindergarten directors and 64.1 % of kindergarten teachers) believe that students' learning results are mediocre. Only 40 % of kindergarten directors, and 30.8 % of kindergarten teachers believe that their students' learning results in English classes are good. On the contrary, most English teachers (60.7 % of Chinese English teachers and 68.2 % of foreign English teachers) are of the opinion that kindergarten students' learning results in English classes are good.

What is the reality of the situation? From my classroom observations, I believe

that on average, the learning results of the kindergarten students in English classes are inadequate. Because of the large class sizes and the limited teaching period in most kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung, it is difficult to achieve satisfactory learning results.

There could be two reasons why most English teachers chose the item “good” to this question:

1. If the English teachers chose “not good” or “mediocre”, it might indicate that their own teaching is ineffective. Therefore, most of them chose “good”.
2. Although they know that the children do not learn well, they may think that according to the expectations of the society, the answer should be “good”. Therefore, they chose that answer.
3. Because of the limited teaching period, kindergarten English teachers only teach simple vocabulary and sentences, which are easy for kindergarten children to memorize. Therefore, the children may appear to be achieving an adequate level of English.

In the next chapter, I will describe my classroom observations in three different kindergartens, to more clearly delineate the current situation of kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung.

7. Observation of kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung

In this section, I will describe my observation of English classes in kindergartens.

Classroom observation in this study is a supplementary tool in order to study kindergartens in really situations. I observed three kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung. The three kindergartens will be called **kindergarten one**, **kindergarten two**, and **kindergarten three** in the following text.

The classes were chosen because they fit the criterion of a typical kindergarten English class in Kaohsiung during the research period. This is how they fit the criterion:

1. As mentioned in chapter 5, most kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung are organized by language institutes. The two different language institutes, which these three kindergartens cooperate with, are the two most famous and biggest language institutes in Kaohsiung. Therefore, the English classes in these three kindergartens are representative examples of kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung.
2. The English classes in kindergarten one and kindergarten two are four days per week at 20-30 minutes per day. This is also typical in Kaohsiung's kindergartens.
3. In kindergarten one and kindergarten two, all the English teachers are Chinese. Therefore, I chose kindergarten three, which has one foreign English teacher, as compensation. I wanted to see how the foreign English

teacher performs in kindergarten, and to compare him with Chinese English teachers.

My classroom observation is focused on the following points:

1. Class size.
2. The language used most often in class.
3. The atmosphere of the class.
4. The understanding of students.
5. The concentration of the students.
6. Do students feel interested in the teaching?
7. Do students have chances to practice individually?

In the following section, I will describe the conditions of the English classes in these three kindergartens and make comments. Before I do that, I will describe the kindergartens briefly, so that we can have a concept about what kind of kindergartens they are.

7.1 Kindergarten one

Outside of this kindergarten, there is a big sign which states: “Offering Japanese and English for all children in this kindergarten.” This sounds quite unique because most kindergartens in Taiwan only offer one foreign language, which is English. However, when I asked the teacher in this kindergarten how their Japanese class was taught, I realized that the Japanese class was just a trick to lure parents in. It cannot really be called a Japanese class because it takes place

in the morning at the time when all students are gathering together in the playground and hoisting flags. That means it is a big class – about 150 students. The kindergarten director teaches 150 young children together at the same time. It can be imagined how the learning results would be with a class of this size.

What are the English classes in this kindergarten like? The English classes are 20-30 minutes per day, at four days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) for each class. There are two Chinese English teachers in this kindergarten, who are dispatched by a language institute. In the following text, I will call the two English teachers **teacher A** and **teacher B**. Both of them are part time English teachers. They come to the kindergarten only at the time they have English classes. Teacher A and B teach the same classes, but on different days. Teacher A teaches Monday and Tuesday, teacher B teaches Thursday and Friday. The class size is very big, about 40 students, because they combine two regular classes together to form one English class.

I observed the English classes in this kindergarten for two days: August 31, 2000, (Thursday) and September 4, 2000 (Monday). The classes were taught by two different English teachers in these two days: Teacher A taught August 31, while teacher B taught September 4. I observed all the English classes in this kindergarten, including low, middle and upper grade classes.

The teaching procedure of the English classes in one period was as follows:

1. warm up
2. review what was taught in the last period
3. key words and today's topic sentences

4. games
5. review what was taught in this period

This teaching procedure is typical in most kindergarten English classes in Kaohsiung.

During the English classes, all students sat on the floor and listened. As mentioned above, language institutes provide their English teachers with training. Although teacher A and teacher B were from the same language institute, their teaching methods were not the same. Teacher A was more qualified than teacher B in teaching children English. This might have something to do with their personality and their teaching experiences. Teacher A has been teaching English in kindergartens for more than three years, while teacher B has only been teaching for one.

They taught the same classes in this kindergarten, but on different days. Because of their different teaching qualifications, while they were teaching, the concentration of the students was different.

The teaching method of teacher A was more interesting. When she played games in the class, she divided students into two groups. She drew interesting cartoon figures on the whiteboard for the group that gave the right answers. When students started chatting during the class, she erased the drawing on the whiteboard, which belonged to the group of the students who were chatting. This caused the students to stop chatting and provided a more controlled teaching atmosphere. She knew how to catch the children's attention in order to have them

concentrate in class. Although the class size was big (40 students), she could still keep students quiet and interested in class.

Although teacher B also used games in class, she could not keep the students' concentration. Fifteen minutes after the beginning of class, the students started to feel uneasy. Some students chatted, and others took out their own things to play with. When it comes to teaching, the most important element is student concentration. If students are chatting, they are not learning. Since teacher B could not achieve this, we could easily ascertain that the children would learn better with teacher A than teacher B.

My critique of English classes in kindergarten one

The class size was too big. It was a big problem. Although the teachers did not teach much in each period, they always tried to allow the students to repeat the sentences frequently. However, the class size was so large that the students could only repeat as a group. The students could not practice individually and, therefore, their mistakes in pronunciation could not be corrected individually either. Some students would not realize that their pronunciation was wrong if teachers did not correct them.

Because of the time limit, it only allowed four or five students to practice individually per day. I noticed that most of the time the students, who were picked to read, either did not know how to read the particular word, or were unable to pronounce it correctly. The teacher did not even let the students try a few times until they could read correctly. If children continue to speak with the wrong pronunciation, they will keep the wrong pronunciation in mind. It would

be difficult for them to change in the future. A famous Japanese violin educator, Shinichi Suzuki, said, if parents sang the wrong tunes to children 10 times, children would need to listen to the right tunes more than 10 times in the future in order to sing the song correctly. I think it is also the same for pronunciation.

The director of this kindergarten asked the English teachers to use English in class. The idea was good, but this way the English teachers had to use more body language in order to let students understand what they meant. The teacher's body language had to be good enough so that the students could guess what the teachers were trying to say. However, during the observation, I noticed that teacher B did not explain well using her body language. So poorly in fact, that during the games, most of the children did not know how to play. For example: in one game the students had to jump to the correct number card. There were ten number cards (from one to ten) on the floor. Two students were picked each time to compete. The one who jumped on the right number card first would be the winner. Most students did not know how to play when they were picked for the game. For most groups, the students just stood there with a dazed, dumbfounded expression on their faces.

To summarize, the size of the English class in this kindergarten was too big. Not only in this kindergarten, but also in many other kindergartens, class size is a leading problem. In order to promote the quality of kindergarten English classes, the class size should be reduced.

7.2 Kindergarten two

Kindergarten two is a kindergarten which employs the Montessori method. In this kindergarten, classrooms are supplied with many Montessori teaching materials. This kindergarten also offers instruction in musical instruments, e.g. piano and violin. The children can learn a musical instrument individually or in a group class.

Three part time Chinese English teachers, who are distributed from a language institute, teach in this kindergarten. In the following text, I will call the three Chinese English teachers: teacher C, D and E.

As in kindergarten one, the English classes in this kindergarten are also four days per week at 30 minutes per day. The class sizes of English classes are different in this kindergarten. In some classes there are about 30 students, while in others there are only 15. The English classes are all in the afternoon. I observed the English classes of the three teachers in this kindergarten from September 7, 2000 to September 14.

My critique of the English classes in kindergarten two

As in kindergarten one, the three English teachers in kindergarten two have different qualifications. Teacher C and D were interesting and changed their activities often, so that the children did not feel bored. Most of the children concentrated in class. The atmosphere in class was joyful. On the contrary, teacher E taught too slowly and was consequently quite boring. The English class in this kindergarten lasted only 30 minutes in each class. Because teacher E taught too slowly during the class, she did not even have time to let students

repeat new words as a group for a few times, let alone practice individually. Moreover, the class, which teacher E taught, was a class of 30 students. Also, teacher E did not speak loudly enough, so the students could not hear her voice clearly.

The pronunciation of teacher E was adequate, besides the sound /t/. For words, such as “ a cat” and “an ant”, she always pronounced /ts/ for the letter “t”, instead of /t/. For a foreign language teacher of young children, incorrect pronunciation is a very serious problem.

In the English classes, teacher C let students sit in a circle on the floor. I think it was a good method for the students to see the teacher as well as other students. In addition, when they play games, they also have more room for action. In teacher E’s class, she let the students sit on chairs in four rows. I don’ t think this is a good seating plan. For example, in one game teacher E put the English letters A, B and C on the floor. The students, who sat in the third and fourth rows, could not see the letters on the floor. Therefore, they could not concentrate in class so they simply amused themselves.

Teaching English songs is a good way to teach young children English. Teacher C and teacher D sometimes played tape recorders, sang songs and danced with the children. However, in their classes, almost none of the children knew how to sing the songs. I think it would be better if the teacher read the text of the song once at the beginning and let students repeat after her sentence by sentence. After that, when they sing with the tape, students will find it more fun.

The three English teachers in this kindergarten have one thing in common. They gave every student a candy at the end of each class. However, they did not use it as a way to help their teaching, just as a way to take up time. An English class lasts only 30 minutes in this kindergarten, and it takes at least 7 minutes to let every student take a candy out of the bag. The students just have to say, “thank you, teacher”. I find this is a pity. Children like candies so I think children will like the English class because they are given candy. I believe that candy can be used as a stronger motivator in learning English. Maybe the teacher can ask each student a question. After the student answers the question, he or she may get a candy. If the student cannot answer the question, the teacher can tell the student the right answer and ask the student to repeat it. When the student repeats the correct sentence, he or she may have a candy. It gives a chance for individual practice and review at the end of class. Some students, who do not like to open their mouths during the class, will also try to say something in English because they want to have candies.

7.3 Kindergarten three

Kindergarten three is attached to a vocational school. The vocational school has many different departments, including a department of young children care and education. There are advantages for this vocational school to have an attached kindergarten. Students who major in young children care and education can have practical training in their attached kindergarten. The kindergarten also benefits from the students as well. It can be very helpful for kindergarten teachers when the vocational school students have practical training in their classes. In general,

there are two kindergarten teachers in a class of about 25 children. While the students do their practical training in the kindergarten, there will be six or seven adults in one class to care for the children. Therefore, it benefits the kindergarten as well as the children.

The English classes in kindergarten three are three days per week at 50 minutes per day. Different from kindergarten one and kindergarten two, there is a foreign English teacher in this kindergarten. Each class is taught two days per week by a Chinese English teacher and one day per week by a foreign English teacher.

This kindergarten is quite expensive. However, many students still enroll because this kindergarten is popular. Many parents of the students are teachers in this vocational school. One teacher explains that some students study English at this kindergarten and also in cram schools. As mentioned earlier, the family must have enough money to afford English classes and must have time to bring their children to cram schools and to pick them up.

Not all children in this kindergarten join the English classes because this kindergarten only offers English classes for five year olds (middle grade classes) and six year olds (upper grade classes).

There are two Chinese English teachers in this kindergarten. In the following text, I will call them **teacher G** and **teacher H**. All middle grade classes in this kindergarten are taught by teacher G, while upper grade classes are taught by teacher H.

There is also one foreign English teacher who teaches both middle and upper grade classes in this kindergarten. At the beginning of the 2000-2001 winter semester, the foreign English teacher in this kindergarten was **teacher J**. In chapter four of this thesis, I have mentioned that kindergarten English teachers must be active. However, teacher J was not active at all. The kindergarten found that his teaching was not appropriate for kindergarten children. Therefore, the kindergarten asked the language institute to change their foreign English teacher. Since November, the kindergarten has had another foreign English teacher, who will be called **teacher K** in the following text.

My classroom observation in this kindergarten was from October 24, 2000 to November 10, 2000. I observed the teaching of all four English teachers in this kindergarten. My classroom observation in this kindergarten was of a longer duration than in the other kindergartens. Initially, I planned to do the classroom observation in this kindergarten for only one week, as I had in kindergartens one and two. During my observation of teacher J, he was often absent. Therefore, I extended my observation time. Two weeks later, the kindergarten changed their foreign English teacher. In order to observe the teaching of their new foreign English teacher, I extended my observation time again.

In kindergarten three, English was the most frequently used language in English classes. Teacher G, teacher J and teacher K used only English in class, no Chinese. Teacher H sometimes used Chinese to explain the rules of games.

As in kindergarten one, all children in kindergarten three sat on the floor in English classes. The class size was about 25 students.

My critique of the English classes in kindergarten three

From my point of view, teacher G is a very good kindergarten English teacher. In class, she acts as if she were a child herself. Her teaching is very active and interesting. Children are curious and teacher G knows how to take advantage of this curiosity when she teaches. For example, when she reviews vocabulary, she hides the flash card of the word behind her back and turns around quickly, so that the students may only have a glance at the flash card. Then the children happily guess what word is on the flash card. The atmosphere in her English class is joyful. Although she only uses English in class, the children do not have any comprehension problems. Even for the rules of games, the children can easily understand the English explanations.

I think teacher G teaches well, but she still has some shortcomings. For example, she seldom lets students repeat the sentences that she wants to teach in that period. She just wants students to listen carefully and to know the meaning. For example, in one period she teaches two questions: “What color is it?” and “What is it?” In the game, she puts two flash cards on the floor. On one card, there is a bird and on the other card, there is no object, only the color red. Two students compete with each other. If the teacher says, “What color is it?”, the student should hit the flash card with the color red. If the teacher says, “What is it?”, the student should hit the flash card with the bird. It takes 20 to 30 minutes to play this game so that every student has the chance to play. The students just listen and hit. I think the teacher could use other games to allow students the opportunity to practice the sentences orally, not just listen.

Perhaps what teacher G intends to do is to develop the children's listening comprehension first. While this is a valid idea, I feel that the 50 minute class period is lengthy enough to provide opportunities for both listening and speaking. The students could listen for the first 30 minutes of class and for the last 20 minutes practice saying the sentences. Both could be accomplished in a fun manner through utilizing games. If students have the chance to listen and speak during the same class period, they may remember the words and sentences better.

The other Chinese English teacher in this kindergarten is teacher H. Although she is not as active as teacher G, her teaching is adequate. I observed two of her English classes. In one class the atmosphere was good. Most students concentrated well. In the other class, it was a bit noisy during her teaching. In the former class, most children learned well. In the latter class, only a few students were attentive enough to achieve satisfactory results.

Teacher H did an excellent job of preparing. What I think teacher H does very well is that she prepares teaching aids and utilizes concrete objects to aid her teaching. The second time I observed her class, she prepared many concrete objects to enhance the lesson: a hat, a cap and necklaces of different lengths. At the end of class, when she wanted to put the teaching aids back into her bag, she used the opportunity to allow students to repeat the vocabulary. While she puts a hat into her bag, she says "good bye hat" and continues doing this until all the objects have been packed away. The students repeat after her, laughing because they find it is funny.

The English teachers of kindergartens two and three are from the same language

institute, but some teaching methods of the English teachers in kindergarten three are better than the English teachers of kindergarten two. For example, while teaching songs, teacher H always reads the text first sentence by sentence with an accompanying activity and has the students repeat the words and activity. After that, they sing and dance with the music on the tape recorder.

At the beginning, when I did my classroom observation, the foreign English teacher in this kindergarten was teacher J. His teaching was very slow and boring. Moreover, he was not active. I found that the other two Chinese English teachers, teacher G and teacher H, taught much better than he did.

Because teacher J taught poorly, the kindergarten asked the language institute to provide a new foreign English teacher. The new foreign English teacher, teacher K, taught very well – he was active and very interesting. He told me that he has been teaching English to children in Taiwan for two years and is currently teaching in many different cram schools, as well as this kindergarten. Teacher K was active with an energetic personality. In one period of class, he used many games. The students felt happy in his class because they could always participate physically. Young children like to do that. For example, when he taught students big G and small g, he carried one child to explain the word “big”. He let children squat and let them curve their bodies to explain the word “small”. The children were very happy to do that activity.

When he reviewed new sentences or new words of a lesson, he always did it using games initially. Then he let students repeat the sentences. The children enjoyed the games and learning in such a joyful atmosphere. The children played

happily with so many games. The children enjoyed learning English in his class and they concentrated well. Although I was only an observer in the class, I had fun in his class and liked his teaching.

7.4 Conclusions after the three kindergarten classroom observations

After completing my classroom observations, I can conclude that:

1. The textbooks of language institutes are usually designed so that students learn every English letter with vocabulary and a rhyme. The English teachers taught the rhyme with activities and the children loved the rhyme and activities. During my classroom observation, I found that most children could remember the rhyme and the activity very well. When they said the rhyme, they always said it with loud and joyful voices, utilizing the activities. Rhymes help children learn English.
2. I found the English teaching materials of different language institutes are generally adequate. The teaching materials also include interesting tapes, so that the children can listen at home to review what they have learned in class. The language institutes work to continually improve their teaching materials. From that, I think the quality of English teaching materials poses no problem for kindergarten English classes. The most important problem for kindergarten English classes is the quality of English teachers.
3. The teaching materials were sufficient. Moreover, the language institute's training of English teachers was very helpful for their English teachers. The

last and most important factor is the qualification of English teachers. How English teachers make the classroom atmosphere joyful and how they teach is more crucial than teaching materials. Many kindergarten English teachers are part time English teachers. They have to make or buy teaching aids by themselves. They also require preparation time. If they are interested in the job and want to spend time preparing and improving their teaching, children can benefit from that. On the contrary, if they are not interested in teaching children English and do not prepare well for their teaching, children's interest in English will decline. A child's first English teacher is important as children may love English because they like the teacher. If the children's first teacher is inadequate at best or detrimental at worst, the children may dislike English now and in the future.

4. I think whether the English teachers are Chinese or foreign is not crucial. The most important points are their qualifications in language competence, teaching technique and personality. If a native speaker of English does not know how to teach English to children, children cannot learn effectively. If a Chinese English teacher teaches well, is competent in English, and uses only English in class, children can also learn well. If children listen to their tape recorders at home, they will develop good listening comprehension and pronunciation. To summarize, if kindergartens want to have foreign English teachers, they should choose those who possess the knowledge to teach English to young children. Employing a foreign teacher, who has no ideas about teaching English to young children, is unacceptable.

8. Conclusion and suggestions regarding foreign language teaching in kindergartens

From many studies and theories and from the opinions of kindergarten directors, kindergarten teachers and English teachers in Kaohsiung, I conclude that it is appropriate for kindergartens to offer English classes. However, as mentioned in chapter 5, kindergarten English classes have many problems. Besides the problems, it is also unfair for the children who are from poor families.

From September 2001, English classes will be offered to all fifth and sixth grade students of all elementary schools in Taiwan. The Education Minister said that in the near future, the English classes would begin in the first grade. As many children have learned English outside of their elementary schools, it has been suggested that the children should be divided into different English classes according to their English levels. One advantage to this division is that it is convenient for teachers to teach. It is also advantageous for the children, as those who have learned English before do not have to waste time relearning the basics of the English language.

However, there are also disadvantages to this division of students. Some children have learned English in kindergartens, in nurseries or in cram schools, but there are also children who have never learned English before they go to elementary school. They do not learn English because the kindergartens or nurseries, which they attended do not offer English classes, and their parents do not have the

money to send them to English cram schools. These children will have to attend the lowest level of English classes in elementary schools and they may feel uncomfortable because their classmates attend the higher level of English classes. They are in the lowest level of English classes not because they are unintelligent, but because their parents cannot afford to have them learn English before they go to elementary school. The children in higher level English classes are from families who have parents that can afford the expensive tuition. It may cause psychological damage to children from poor families. It will also be a serious flaw in Taiwan's education system. What can the government do to avoid that and to make kindergarten English classes more effective?

1. The government should make laws governing kindergarten English classes, so that all public and private kindergartens can legally offer English classes. It is not fair for the children who do not have the opportunity to learn English before elementary school, while other children can, because their parents can afford the tuition. Although kindergartens are not part of the public education sphere in Taiwan, the government should work to allow all children to have the equal chance to learn English in kindergartens.
2. The government should establish a rule concerning the minimum number of required hours of kindergarten English classes per week, so that public kindergartens will have guidelines for administering their English classes.
3. The government should also set up a rule regarding foreign English teachers. Currently, it is illegal for kindergartens to employ foreign English teachers, although some kindergartens do it regardless of the law. The government

should set up rules regarding a foreign English teacher's working allowance.

4. It is better if kindergarten English teachers can understand young children well. Therefore, universities should offer courses such as child psychology, child development, and teaching methods courses, as elective subjects for students who major in English and are interested in teaching English to young children. In addition, courses such as how to take care of young children and how to be patient when working with children are also important for students who want to be kindergarten English teachers in the future.
5. It would be better if the English level of kindergarten teachers was improved, so that they could communicate with foreign English teachers and help do English review outside of English classes. Therefore, it is suggested that at departments of early childhood care and education in colleges or universities, subjects such as English pronunciation and easy conversation should be offered.
6. Although most kindergarten English teachers are from language institutes and are trained to teach English to young children, their qualifications are very different. Some of them teach very well, some do not. Sometimes kindergarten directors will not notice the inadequate qualification of the teachers because many kindergarten directors have limited English language skills. Perhaps it would be better if the government gave kindergarten directors regular training regarding easy English conversation. In addition, the Educational Bureau could invite kindergarten directors to have meetings

and submit their suggestions and the problems they encountered, which they would like the government to assist with.

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10. Appendix 1: Questionnaire for kindergarten directors

I am a student in Germany. This questionnaire is for my doctorate thesis. Please fill in this questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.

Questionnaire for kindergarten directors:

Part I Information about the interviewee and the kindergarten

1. Sex: (1) male (2) female
2. Are there English classes in this kindergarten?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
3. What English classes are there in this kindergarten? (multiple-choice item)
 - (1) Low grade class (for 3-year-old children)
 - (2) Middle grade class (for 4-year-old children)
 - (3) Upper grade class (for 5-year-old children)
4. The English class in this kindergarten is _____ days in a week; _____ minutes in a day. (If there are more than one kind of English class in this kindergarten, what are they? _____ days in a week; _____ minutes in a day.)(_____ days in a week; _____ minutes in a day.)
5. Do all the children in this kindergarten visit the English classes which this kindergarten offers?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
6. How many children are there in this kindergarten? _____
How many children visit the English classes in this kindergarten? _____
7. The English teachers in this kindergarten are: (multiple-choice item)
 - (1) foreign teacher ☐ full time ☐ part time
 - (2) Chinese teacher ☐ full time ☐ part time
 - (3) The Chinese English teacher works with a foreign English teacher together in class.
 - (4) Foreign teachers teach in English classes. Chinese teachers do review outside of English classes.
 - (5) others _____
8. Do foreign teachers teach some English classes in this kindergarten and, because of the cost, are some English classes taught by Chinese teachers?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
9. How many foreign English teachers are there in this kindergarten? _____
How many Chinese English teachers are there in this kindergarten? _____
10. When was this kindergarten established? _____
11. How long has this kindergarten offered English classes? _____

Part II Teaching Resources

1. Do you use any teaching materials in the English classes in this kindergarten?
 - (1) No.
 - (2) Yes, the teaching materials are bought from the store.
 - (3) Yes, the teaching materials are edited by the teacher him-/herself.
 - (4) Others _____
2. What kind of English teaching material do you think is the best for the English classes in kindergarten?
 - (1) teaching material from a foreign market
 - (2) the teacher compiled them by him-/herself
 - (3) local experts compiled them for local students
 - (4) others _____

Part III Opinions of English classes in kindergarten

1. How many periods and how many days a week is optimal for English class?
_____ days per week and per day
 - (1) 1 period (40 minutes)
 - (2) 2 periods
 - (3) 3 periods
 - (4) 4 periods
 - (5) 5 periods
 - (6) more than 5 periods
2. What class size is preferred for English classes in a kindergarten?
 - (1) below 10 students
 - (2) 10-15
 - (3) 16-20
 - (4) 21-25
 - (5) more than 26
3. What language is optimal to be used in the English classes in kindergarten?
 - (1) all in English, no Chinese
 - (2) mostly in English, with a little Chinese to explain difficult concepts
 - (3) mostly in Chinese
 - (4) sometimes in English, sometimes in Chinese
4. What is your opinion about when the optimal time to begin learning English is?
 - (1) Before kindergarten (before 3 years old)
 - (2) At 3 years old.
 - (3) At 4 years old.
 - (4) At 5 years old.
 - (5) In primary school.
 - (6) In junior high school.
5. Do you think kindergarten children's learning English will influence their Chinese?

- (1) Yes, with a positive influence.
 - (2) Yes, with a negative influence.
 - (3) Yes, with both positive and negative influences.
 - (4) without any influence.
6. What should be included in kindergarten English classes? (Please write numbers before the answers, “1” means the most important, “2” means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) conversation
 - (2) listening
 - (3) reading
 - (4) pronunciation
 - (5) vocabulary
 - (6) grammar
 - (7) to raise children’s interest in English
 - (8) education and understanding of British and American culture
7. What problems are there in the English class in kindergarten (Please write numbers before the answers, “1” means the most important, “2” means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) lack of teaching aids in kindergarten
 - (2) lack of appropriate teaching material
 - (3) The class size is too big.
 - (4) The class periods per week are too few.
 - (5) Parents do not help their children to review.
 - (6) Students are not interested in learning English.
 - (7) English teachers lack training in Methodology and teaching with games.
 - (8) Lack of teachers who are native speakers of English.
 - (9) others
8. Do you think it is too early for kindergarten children to learn a foreign language?
- (1) Yes
 - (2) No
9. What are the factors that influence learning English effectively? (Please write numbers before the answers, “1” means the most important, “2” means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) a quality teacher
 - (2) good teaching materials
 - (3) interesting teaching methods
 - (4) parents helping with review
 - (5) watching English video films often
 - (6) listening to English tapes often
 - (7) the language talent of the children

- (8) the interest of the children in learning English
- (9) others (explain)_____
10. What do you think should be taught in English class in kindergarten? (Please write numbers, “1” means the most important, “2” means second important, etc.)
- (1) the 26 letters of the alphabet
- (2) kk phonics
- (3) phonics
- (4) grammar
- (5) easy conversation
- (6) English songs
- (7) reading easy stories
- (8) games
- (9) pattern practice
- (10) look at pictures and make sentences
- (11) others_____
11. Should kindergarten children be given English writing homework?
- (1) Yes, it is necessary.
- (2) No, it is not necessary.
12. Do you think it is necessary to use a textbook in kindergarten English classes?
- (1) Yes
- (2) No
13. Do you think parents helping with review aids children in learning English better? ?
- (1) Yes
- (2) No
14. Do most parents have a lot of expectations about kindergarten English classes?
- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
15. Do you think current English classes in kindergarten can meet most parents’ expectations?
- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.

Part IV About English teacher and teaching method

1. What nationality is better for a kindergarten English teacher?
- (1) English native speakers
- (2) Chinese English teacher
- (3) both native English speaker and Chinese English teacher together in class
- (4) either one
2. What qualifications should a Chinese English teacher have? (multiple-choice term)

- (1) Major in English
 - (2) Correct pronunciation
 - (3) Fluency in English, but not necessarily with a major in English
 - (4) Appropriate training in teaching English to children
 - (5) Familiarity with child psychology
 - (6) Desire to continue educating him-/herself
 - (7) others _____
3. What qualifications should a foreign English teacher have? (multiple-choice term)
- (1) native English speaker
 - (2) Correct pronunciation
 - (3) Appropriate training in teaching English to children
 - (4) Familiarity with child psychology
 - (5) Desire to continue educating him-/herself
 - (6) others _____
4. What teaching method is used in this kindergarten?
- (1) total or partial immersion
 - (2) silent way
 - (3) the direct method
 - (4) whole language
 - (5) grammar-translation approach
 - (6) total physical response
 - (7) communicative language teaching
 - (8) no teaching method is used
 - (9) others _____

Part V Others

1. What is the main reason that your students learn English at an early age? (only choose one answer)
 - (1) preparation for their English class in primary and junior high school
 - (2) The earlier the better.
 - (3) They will travel or study in foreign countries in the future.
 - (4) others _____
2. In the English classes in this kindergarten:
- (1) A schedule is planned in advance. The English class is taught according to the schedule.
 - (2) There is no schedule. English is taught spontaneously with easy conversation or vocabulary.
3. Do you think kindergartens should offer English classes?
- (1) Yes
 - (2) No

4. What is the learning result for most of the pupils in English classes in kindergarten?
- (1) good
 - (2) mediocre
 - (3) not good
5. What is your opinion of English classes in this kindergarten?
- (1) English class is **not** an important class in this kindergarten.
 - (2) In this kindergarten, we take English classes as important classes.
6. What is the aim of the English class in your kindergarten?
- (1) The kindergarten just wants to introduce the foreign language to the children and to make the initial learning experience pleasurable. Good learning in English is not expected.
 - (2) The kindergarten wants the students to have fun in learning English and hopes that pupils can achieve a particular level in English language.
7. What is your opinion? What kind of English class in kindergarten is better?
- (1) The English classes should just let children have fun. Good learning in English is not expected.
 - (2) Good quality of English classes is offered and hopes that pupils can have fun and can achieve a particular level in the English language.
8. Do you hope that the government may subsidize English classes in kindergarten?
- (1) Yes.
 - (2) No.
9. Should parents pay more for foreign English teachers than Chinese English teachers?
- (1) Yes.
 - (2) No.
10. What is your teaching method? Please describe how you teach English in kindergarten.
-
-
11. Are there any points to the English classes in this kindergarten, which are special, and are not mentioned yet?
-
-
12. What is the aim of the English classes in this kindergarten in the future?
-
-
13. Are there any points that should be improved in the English classes in kindergarten? Are there any difficulties in teaching English in kindergarten?
-
-

11. Appendix 2: Questionnaire for kindergarten and Chinese English teachers

I am a student in Germany. This questionnaire is for my doctorate thesis. Please fill in this questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.

Questionnaire for kindergarten and Chinese English teachers:

Part I Information about the interviewee and the kindergarten

1. Sex: (1) male (2) female
2. You are:
 - (1) English teacher
 - (2) kindergarten teacher
 - (3) both
3. What class do you teach in kindergarten? (multiple-choice item)
 - (1) Low grade class (for 3-year-old children)
 - (2) Middle grade class (for 4-year-old children)
 - (3) Upper grade class (for 5-year-old children)
4. Educational Background (If you are not an English teacher, please skip this question and go directly to part III in page 3)
Name of College or University where highest degree was obtained: _____
Major subject: _____
5. For the classes you teach, the English classes are _____ days per week; _____ minutes per day.
6. How long have you been teaching English in kindergarten?
 - (1) less than one year
 - (2) one to two years
 - (3) two to three years
 - (4) more than three years
7. Have you ever taught children English before you taught in a kindergarten?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
8. In this kindergarten, you are a
 - (1) full time English teacher.
 - (2) part time English teacher.
9. In the English classes in this kindergarten, you
 - (1) teach with a foreign English teacher together in one class.
 - (2) teach by yourself.
 - (3) sometimes teach by yourself and sometimes teach with a foreign English teacher.
10. Have you been trained to teach young children English?
 - (1) No
 - (2) Yes, I received the training in this kindergarten.

- (3) Yes, I received the training in another kindergarten or cram school.
- (4) Others (please explain) _____
11. Do you think the training is necessary for English teachers?
- (1) Yes
- (2) No
12. What do you think should be included in the training of EFL teachers? (multiple-choice item)
- (1) pronunciation
- (2) games and easy English songs
- (3) teaching methods
- (4) English conversation
- (5) Others (please explain) _____
13. What language is used in the English class in this kindergarten?
- (1) all in English, no Chinese
- (2) mostly in English, with a little Chinese to explain difficult concepts
- (3) mostly in Chinese
- (4) sometimes English, sometimes Chinese
14. What is the current class size in your kindergarten?
- (1) below 10 students
- (2) 10-15
- (3) 16-20
- (4) 21-25
- (5) more than 26
15. In your English classes
- (1) The schedule is planned in advance. The English class is taught according to the schedule.
- (2) There is no schedule. English is taught spontaneously with easy conversation or vocabulary.

Part II Teaching Resources

1. Do you use any teaching materials?
- (1) No
- (2) Yes, the teaching materials are bought from the store.
- (3) Yes, the teaching materials are edited by the teacher him-/herself.
- (4) Others _____
2. If your teaching materials are from a store, what is the focus of each textbook? (multiple-choice item)
- (1) stories (2) conversation (3) pattern practice
- (4) songs (5) pronunciation (6) others _____ ,
- How many books do you use for English class? _____

Name of the books: (please also write the volume number.):

Publishing company: _____

3. What kind of English teaching materials do you think are best for English classes in kindergartens?
 - (1) teaching material from a foreign market
 - (2) the teacher compiled by him-/herself
 - (3) local experts compiled for local students
 - (4) others _____
4. What teaching aids have you used in your class? (multiple-choice item)
 - (1) real objects
 - (2) pictures
 - (3) ball or puppet etc. for games
 - (4) picture cards
 - (5) word cards
 - (6) video tape
 - (7) tape
 - (8) others _____

Part III Opinions of English classes in kindergarten

1. How many periods and how many days per week are optimal for English class?
_____ days per week and per day
 - (1) 1 period (40 minutes)
 - (2) 2 periods
 - (3) 3 periods
 - (4) 4 periods
 - (5) more than 5 periods
2. What class size is preferred for English classes in a kindergarten?
 - (1) under 10 students
 - (2) 10-15
 - (3) 16-20
 - (4) 21-25
 - (5) more than 26
3. What is the optimal language to be used in the English classes in kindergarten?
 - (1) all in English, no Chinese
 - (2) mostly in English, with a little Chinese to explain difficult concepts.
 - (3) mostly in Chinese
 - (4) sometimes in English, sometimes in Chinese
4. What is your opinion about when the optimal time to begin learning English is?

- (1) before kindergarten (before 3 years old)
 - (2) At 3 years old
 - (3) At 4 years old
 - (4) At 5 years old
 - (5) In primary school
 - (6) In junior high school
5. Do you think kindergarten children's learning English will influence their Chinese?
- (1) Yes, with a positive influence.
 - (2) Yes, with a negative influence.
 - (3) Yes. With both positive and negative influences.
 - (4) Without any influence.
6. What should be included in kindergarten English classes? (Please write numbers in the ý, "1" means the most important, "2" means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) ý conversation
 - (2) ý listening
 - (3) ý reading
 - (4) ý pronunciation
 - (5) ý vocabulary
 - (6) ý grammar
 - (7) ý to raise children's interest in English
 - (8) ý education and understanding of British and American culture
7. What problems are there in the English class in kindergarten (Please write numbers in the ý, "1" means the most important, "2" means the second most important, etc.)?
- (1) ý lack of teaching aids in kindergarten
 - (2) ý lack of appropriate teaching material
 - (3) ý The class size is too big.
 - (4) ý The class periods per week are too few.
 - (5) ý Parents do not help their children to review
 - (6) ý Students are not interested in learning English.
 - (7) ý English teachers lack training in Methodology and teaching with games.
 - (8) ý Lack of teachers who are native speakers of English.
 - (9) Others _____
8. Do you think it is too early for kindergarten children to learn a foreign language?
- (1) Yes
 - (2) No
9. What are the factors that influence learning English effectively? (Please write numbers in the ý, "1" means the most important, "2" means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) ý a quality teacher

- (2) ȳ good teaching material
 - (3) ȳ interesting teaching methods
 - (4) ȳ parents helping with review
 - (5) ȳ watching English video films often
 - (6) ȳ listening to English tapes often
 - (7) ȳ the language talent of the children
 - (8) ȳ the interest of the children in learning English
 - (9) others (explain)_____
10. What do you think should be taught in English class in kindergarten? (multiple-choice item)
- (1) the 26 letters of the alphabet
 - (2) kk phonics
 - (3) phonics
 - (4) grammar
 - (5) easy conversation
 - (6) English songs
 - (7) reading easy stories
 - (8) games
 - (9) pattern practice
 - (10) look at pictures and make sentences
 - (11) others_____
11. Do you think it is necessary to ask children to listen to their English tape as homework?
- (1) Yes, it is necessary.
 - (2) No, it is not necessary.
12. Should kindergarten children be given English writing homework?
- (1) Yes, it is necessary.
 - (2) No, it is not necessary.
13. Do you think it is necessary to use a textbook in kindergarten English classes?
- (3) Yes
 - (4) No
14. How often do the parents help their children do English review?
- (1) sometimes
 - (2) every day
 - (3) often
 - (4) never
15. Do you think parents helping with review aids children in learning English better?
- (1) Yes
 - (2) No

16. Do most parents have a lot of expectations about kindergarten English classes?
- (1) Yes.
 - (2) No.
17. Do you think current English classes in kindergartens can meet most parents' expectations?
- (1) Yes.
 - (2) No.

Part IV English teacher and teaching method

1. What nationality is better for a kindergarten English teacher?
- (1) native speakers of English
 - (2) Chinese English teacher
 - (3) both native English speaker and Chinese English teacher together in class
 - (4) either one
2. What qualifications should a **Chinese English teacher** have? (multiple-choice term)
- (1) Major in English
 - (2) Correct pronunciation
 - (3) Fluency in English, but not necessarily with a major in English.
 - (4) Appropriate training in teaching English to children
 - (5) Familiarity with child psychology
 - (6) Desire to continue educating him-/herself
 - (7) others_____
3. What qualifications should a **foreign English teacher** have? (multiple-choice term)
- (1) Native English speaker
 - (2) Correct pronunciation
 - (3) Appropriate training in teaching English to children
 - (4) Familiarity with child psychology
 - (5) Desire to continue educating him-/herself
 - (6) others_____
4. What teaching method is used in this kindergarten?
- (1) total or partial immersion
 - (2) silent way
 - (3) the direct method
 - (4) whole language
 - (5) grammar-translation approach
 - (6) total physical response
 - (7) communicative language teaching
 - (8) no teaching method is used
 - (9) others _____

Part V Others

1. Do you give your students English homework?
 - (1) No
 - (2) Yes, they listen to a tape recorder at home.
 - (3) Yes, writing homework.
 - (4) others _____
2. What is the main reason that your students learn English at an early age? (only choose one answer)
 - (1) preparation for their English class in primary and junior high school
 - (2) The earlier the better and they do not have pressure in learning.
 - (3) They will travel or study in foreign countries in the future.
 - (4) others _____
3. Do the children in your English class have to record what they learned in English class and listen to it at home?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
4. Do you think kindergartens should offer English classes?
 - (1) Yes.
 - (2) No.
5. What is the learning result for most of the pupils in English classes in kindergarten?
 - (1) good
 - (2) mediocre
 - (3) not good
6. What is the aim of the English class in your kindergarten?
 - (1) The kindergarten just wants to introduce the foreign language to the children and to make the initial learning experience pleasurable. Good learning in English is not expected.
 - (2) The kindergarten wants the students to have fun in learning English and hopes that pupils can achieve a particular level in the English language.
7. What is your opinion? What kind of English class in kindergarten is better?
 - (1) The English classes should just let children have fun. Good learning in English is not expected.
 - (2) Good quality of English classes is offered and hopes that pupils can have fun and can achieve a particular level in English language.
8. What is your teaching method? Please describe how you teach English in kindergarten.

9. Are there any points that should be improved in the English classes in kindergarten? Are there any difficulties in teaching English in kindergarten?

12. Appendix 3: Questionnaire for foreign English teachers of kindergarten

I am a student in Germany. This questionnaire is for my doctorate thesis. Please fill in this questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.

Questionnaire for foreign English teachers of kindergarten:

Part I Information about the interviewee and the kindergarten

1. Sex: (1) male (2) female
2. What is your nationality? _____
3. What class do you teach in kindergarten? (multiple-choice item)
 - (1) Low grade class (for 3-year-old children)
 - (2) Middle grade class (for 4-year-old children)
 - (3) Upper grade class (for 5-year-old children)
4. Educational Background:
Name of College or University where your highest degree was obtained:

Major subject: _____
5. For the classes you teach, the English classes are _____ days per week; _____ minutes per day. (If there is more than one kind of English class in this kindergarten, what are the others: _____ days per week; _____ minutes per day.)
6. How long have you been teaching English in kindergarten?
 - (1) less than one year
 - (2) one to two years
 - (3) two to three years
 - (4) more than three years
7. Had you taught children English before you came to Taiwan?
 - (1) Yes
 - (2) No
8. In this kindergarten, you are a
 - (1) full time English teacher.
 - (2) part time English teacher.
9. In the English classes in this kindergarten, you
 - (1) teach with a Chinese English teacher together in one class.
 - (2) teach by yourself.
10. Have you been trained to teach young children English?
 - (1) No
 - (2) Yes, I received the training in this kindergarten.
 - (3) Yes, I received the training in another kindergarten or cram school.
 - (4) Others (please explain) _____
11. Do you think the training is necessary for English teachers?

- (1) Yes
(2) No
12. What do you think should be included in the training of EFL teachers? (multiple-choice item)
- (1) pronunciation
(2) games and easy English songs
(3) teaching methods
(4) English conversation
(5) Others (please explain) _____
13. What language is used in the English class in this kindergarten?
- (1) all in English, no Chinese
(2) mostly in English, with a little Chinese to explain difficult concepts
(3) mostly in Chinese
(4) sometimes English, sometimes Chinese
14. What is the current class size in your kindergarten?
- (1) below 10 students
(2) 10-15
(3) 16-20
(4) 21-25
(5) more than 26
15. In your English classes
- (1) The schedule is planned in advance and the English class is taught according to the schedule.
(2) There is no schedule. English is taught spontaneously with easy conversation or vocabulary.

Part II Teaching Resources

1. Do you use any teaching materials?
- (1) No.
(2) Yes. The teaching materials are from the foreign market.
(3) Yes. The teaching materials are edited by the teacher by him-/herself
2. If your teaching materials are from a store, what is the focus of each textbook? (multiple-choice item)
- (1) stories (2) conversation (3) pattern practice
(4) songs (5) pronunciation (6) others _____ ,
- How many books do you use for English class? _____
- Names of the books: (please also write the volume number.): _____
- Publishing company: _____

3. What kind of English teaching material do you think is best for English classes in kindergartens?
 - (1) teaching material from a foreign market
 - (2) the teacher compiled by him-/herself
 - (3) local experts compiled for local students
 - (4) others _____
4. What teaching aids have you ever used in your class? (multiple-choice item)
 - (1) real objects
 - (2) pictures
 - (3) ball or puppet etc. for games
 - (4) picture cards
 - (5) word cards
 - (6) video tape
 - (7) tape
 - (8) others _____

Part III Opinions of English classes in kindergarten

1. How many periods and how many days per week are optimal for English class?

_____ days per week and per day

 - (1) 1 period (40 minutes)
 - (2) 2 periods
 - (3) 3 periods
 - (4) 4 periods
 - (5) more than 5 periods
2. What class size is preferred for English classes in a kindergarten?
 - (1) under 10 students
 - (2) 10-15
 - (3) 16-20
 - (4) 21-25
 - (5) more than 26
3. What is your opinion about when the optimal time to begin learning English is?
 - (1) before kindergarten (before 3 years old)
 - (2) At 3 years old
 - (3) At 4 years old
 - (4) At 5 years old
 - (5) In primary school
 - (6) In junior high school
4. Do you think kindergarten children's learning English will influence their Chinese?
 - (1) Yes, with a positive influence.

- (2) Yes, with a negative influence.
 - (3) Yes, with both positive and negative influences.
 - (4) Without any influence.
5. What should be included in kindergarten English classes? (Please write numbers in the ý, “1” means the most important, “2” means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) ý conversation
 - (2) ý listening
 - (3) ý reading
 - (4) ý pronunciation
 - (5) ý vocabulary
 - (6) ý grammar
 - (7) ý to raise children’s interest in English
 - (8) ý education and understanding of British and American culture
6. What problems are there in the English class in kindergarten (Please write numbers in the ý, “1” means the most important, “2” means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) ý lack of teaching aids in kindergarten
 - (2) ý lack of appropriate teaching material
 - (3) ý The class size is too big.
 - (4) ý The class periods per week are too few.
 - (5) ý Parents do not help their children to review.
 - (6) ý Students are not interested in learning English.
 - (7) ý English teachers lack training in Methodology and teaching with games.
 - (8) ý Lack of teachers who are native speakers of English.
 - (9) Others _____
7. Do you think it is too early for kindergarten children to learn a foreign language?
- (3) Yes
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8. What are the factors that influence learning English effectively? (Please write numbers in the ý, “1” means the most important, “2” means the second most important, etc.)
- (1) ý a quality teacher
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