

A Study of Technical College Freshmen's Opinions about English Ability Grouping Teaching in Southern Taiwan

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Abstract

To promote students' English proficiency, in those years, almost every college has paid much attention to the effectiveness of English teaching. Due to the big and multilevel classes, it is not easy for English teachers to reach their expected teaching goals. When teachers teach a large multilevel class, it looks like a suffering to both teachers and students in such an English class, and the effectiveness of English teaching and learning seems unsatisfactory. Therefore, some colleges began to implement English placement teaching several years ago; perhaps that is another way to solve the problem of English teaching and learning. The purpose of the study is to understand technical college freshmen's opinions about English ability grouping teaching, and what students' expectations are in English teaching. First, the researcher designed a questionnaire about English ability grouping teaching according to her teaching experience and some practical situations, and the questionnaire had been reviewed by three English experts. Then, she chose a technical college conducting English ability grouping teaching as the subject. Following, she did the survey three times to get the subjects' opinions about English ability grouping teaching; one was in 2006, another in 2007, and the other in 2008. Next, she analyzed the data collected and drew up the conclusion according to her findings. Finally, the researcher provided some implications for English ability grouping teaching.

Keywords : English proficiency, questionnaire, effectiveness, English ability grouping teaching

I. Introduction

In those years, many people including teachers, parents, and employers have criticized college students' poor English proficiency. In the last ten years, many colleges were established; therefore, a number of students with low English level attend in college. Though English level is not the only criterion for entering a college, there is no denying that English level is the basic requirement to study in college because many teachers ask students to

read English textbooks or papers. And most colleges require students to take at least one-year English course to enhance their English competence, but mostly English classes are large and multileveled. In fact, it is a challenge and suffering for teachers to teach. Many private colleges consider cost effectiveness; therefore, it is not economical to implement small class teaching. However, how to keep balance between economy and teaching effectiveness is worth brainstorming. In addition, how to improve students' English proficiency to promote their competency is extremely essential.

II. Literature Review

It is common for English teachers in Taiwan to teach groups of fifty or more students in classes where students not only differed in language acquisition ability, but also in age, motivation, intelligence, self-discipline, literacy skills, attitude, and interest. Many teachers are extremely worried about the fact that they have students in their classes who are at different levels of proficiency, and many teachers see mixed-ability classes as especially problematic. For teachers, to teach in such a situation is a challenge and it is difficult to provide for individual learning styles and expectations. In fact, most language classes are multileveled since all learners are different in language aptitude, in language proficiency, and in general attitude toward language, as well as in learning styles (Hess, 2001). However, there is particular concern for the needs not only of students who are having difficulty at the lower end of the scale, but also for "gifted" learners (Dinnocenti, 1998). That is, teaching on ability grouping may be a possible solution to teach multileveled students.

As matter of fact, in Taiwan, it is the primary problem for English teachers to teach students with different English levels. How to solve this problem seems to be necessary if a teacher expects to reach his or her teaching goal. In a differentiated classroom there are a variety of learning options designed around students' different abilities and interests (Tomlinson, 1995). Under such a situation, students can learn according to their abilities, and they can get sense of accomplishment. Harmer (2007) also pointed that one way of working with students at different levels and with different needs was to provide them with different materials, tailoring what we gave them to their individual needs. Therefore, it is a possible way to solve the problem of English teaching by teaching English on ability grouping. First, it is necessary for students to have an English placement test, and then place the students into different classes according to their ability. The purpose of

placement test is to place a student into a particular level or section of a language curriculum or school. A placement test usually, but not always, includes a sampling of the material to be covered in the various courses in a curriculum; a student's performance on the test should indicate the point at which the student will find materials neither too easy nor too difficult but appropriately challenging.

Generally speaking, English ability grouping teaching is based on the Input Hypothesis proposed by Stephen Krashen. The following part would introduce the input hypothesis and some research related to teaching on ability group.

1. The Input Hypothesis

Over the last thirty years, researchers have proposed a number of theories in order to better understand and explain human behaviors. Researchers working in disciplines such as sociology, psychology, linguistics and education have made great contributions in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research. Krashen's input hypothesis is quite popular and often used to be one of the basic theories to study SLA. In fact, Krashen's input hypothesis consists of five main hypotheses: (1) the acquisition learning hypothesis; (2) the monitor hypothesis; (3) the natural order hypothesis; (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective-filter hypothesis (Lightbown & Spada, 1998). The input hypothesis also states that an acquirer must not be forced to speak too early. In other words, a certain amount of comprehensible input must be built up before the acquirer is required to speak in a classroom (Brown, 2000).

According to Krashen's statement, many second language learners will go through what is referred to by some as a silent period when learners gradually receive and build enough comprehensible input so that they can start to produce their own structures. SLA theoretical perspectives, like those in other social sciences, are dynamic in that hypotheses are constantly evolving as new information about language is produced. Brown (2000) stated that the input hypothesis claimed that an important "condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer *understand* (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure 'a bit beyond' his or her current level of competence...If an acquirer is at stage or level i , the input he or she understands should contain $i+1$ " (Krashen, 1981). That is, the language that learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current competence that they can understand most of it but still should be challenged to make progress.

Krashen (1985) emphasized 'humans acquire language in only one way - by understanding messages or by receiving "comprehensible input"' and indicated that the more comprehensible input the greater the L2 proficiency, and lack of comprehensible input delayed language acquisition. That is, if students find learning materials too difficult, it is easy for them to give up learning; then, teaching effectiveness cannot pull out. Krashen also mentioned that teaching methods worked according to the extent that they used comprehensible input and immersion teaching was successful because it provided comprehensible input.

As a matter of fact, the input hypothesis is Krashen's attempt to explain how the learner acquires a second language. In other words, this hypothesis is Krashen's explanation of how second language acquisition takes place. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order' when he/she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'. Since not all of the learners can be at the same level of linguistic competence at the same time, Krashen suggests that *natural communicative input* is the key to designing a course, ensuring in this way that each learner will receive some 'i + 1' input that is appropriate for his/her current stage of linguistic competence. And this concept matches the core idea of ability grouping; in other words, teachers provide students comprehensible teaching materials and let students have successful experience in learning.

2. Some research based on Input Hypothesis

In these years, several researchers have conducted some research in English placement teaching on ability grouping, especially in China. In fact, teaching on ability grouping is very similar to the Confucius' educational philosophy of "teaching students in accordance with their aptitude." In other words, teachers teach students with high level more advanced materials and teach students with low level easier materials. Obviously, English placement teaching on ability grouping is consistent with the concept of Krashen's Input Hypothesis and "i+1" theory.

Yue (2003) mentioned the necessity of carrying out English placement teaching on ability grouping in higher education by studying "i+1" theory. Moreover, Liu and Li (2003) analyzed the possibility of employing "i+1" theory in placement teaching and supported the rationality of adopting placement teaching. And, Chen (2004) also explored the relationship

between Input Hypothesis and English placement teaching in college, and pointed that the Input Hypothesis was one of the most crucial theoretical foundation for conducting English placement teaching in college.

3. Some research about English placement teaching on ability grouping in college

Due to the problems of teaching multileveled class, many scholars in China studied the possibility of English teaching on ability group in China and many of them believed that English placement teaching on ability grouping would be popular in the future, for example, Jiang (2004) advocated English placement teaching on ability grouping to promote the quality and level of English teaching in China. Moreover, Guo and Cao (2004) chose junior college students as participants and found that English placement teaching on ability grouping significantly promote students' English proficiency. Furthermore, Ruan (2004) affirmed the effectiveness of placement teaching and indicated placement teaching adhered to the teaching concept of student-center and expressed the principles of "teaching students in accordance with their aptitude." Therefore, Zhou and Wang (2005) pointed English placement teaching on ability grouping would be a trend because it had been proved a new and effective teaching model.

As a matter of fact, not only scholars in China but also researchers in other countries interested in studying English placement teaching on ability grouping. Some studies proved the significance of English placement teaching on ability grouping but some did not. For example, Holloway (2001) showed that several studies found that grouping plans improved learning and achievement for certain students. Moreover, Saleh et al. (2005) indicated that low-ability students achieved more and were more motivated to learn in heterogeneous groups and average-ability students performed better in homogeneous groups whereas high-ability students showed equally strong learning outcomes in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. Additionally, Hallam et al. (2005) showed that the curriculum was differentiated more in ability grouped classes by content, depth, the activities undertaken and the resources used. Moreover, differences in pedagogy were evident in the responses of teachers who taught both mixed ability and ability grouped classes. The power of the grouping structures was further confirmed by the similarities in responses from teachers working in schools where the predominant grouping practices differed.

However, Ireson et al. (2005) showed that the use of ability grouping was frequently justified on the grounds that it was an effective means of raising

attainment. Moreover, they found that there were no significant effects of setting in English, mathematics or science, and socially disadvantaged students achieved significantly lower grades and girls achieved higher grades than boys, especially in English. Ireson et al. (2005) also found that there was no significant effect of the extent of ability grouping in the school as a whole, and affective aspects of learning should not be neglected in the drive to raise standards.

In fact, English placement teaching not only focuses on learning efficiency but also teaching effectiveness. For example, Chen (2005) thought English placement teaching made teaching and learning combine together and confirmed the effectiveness of English placement teaching. And, English teaching makes teaching focus on students instead of teachers. Therefore, Liu (2005) believed that English placement teaching on ability grouping in college focused on “student-centered” approaches and could help students find self-esteem, and reflect themselves. Moreover, Chen (2005) indicated English placement teaching on ability grouping emphasized different starting point, schedule, and material according to students’ levels and it could increase students’ competition cognition and develop students’ ambition of striving the best.

Though many scholars emphasized the advantages of English placement teaching on ability grouping, it did not mean there were not any disadvantages on English placement teaching. For example, Shen and Wang (2005) found students from Guang-Zhou University supported English placement teaching; however, there were some inevitable problems, such students’ mental contrast feelings. They also pointed the effectiveness of English placement teaching also depended on administrative coordination. And, Liu et al.(2005) showed that in the process of teaching on ability grouping, the lower-ability stream students had a more negative academic self-concept than the higher-ability stream students immediately after streaming, but they had a more positive academic self-concept 3 years after being streamed. Moreover, Li (2007) pointed that in recent years, teaching college English at different levels had attracted more and more attention in the mainland. Wuhan University had already conducted such a reform-teaching English at different levels. More and more colleges were going to follow the suit. Still there were many doubts among teachers and students about placement teaching on ability grouping.

4. The possibility of teaching on ability grouping

Research on ability grouping had continued for almost a century. Tieso (2004) showed that in an early summary of ability-grouping practices, Passow (1962) suggested that the results of numerous studies on ability grouping depended less on the "fact of grouping itself than upon the philosophy behind the grouping, the accuracy with which grouping is made for the purposes intended, the differentiations in content, method, and speed, and the technique of the teacher" (p. 284). Kulik (1992) reviewed early studies of research on ability grouping (i.e., 1900's-1950's) and applied meta-analytic techniques (Glass, 1976) to these studies. He found nontrivial average effects ($ES = .14$) for students grouped for mathematics by ability, without any curricular adjustment, when compared to whole class instruction.

Tieso (2004) showed that modern meta-analytic studies suggest that average effect sizes for student achievement in classes grouped according to the Joplin Plan (with curricular adjustment) is .33, a small but nontrivial effect size (Kulik & Kulik, 1982). Kulik and Kulik investigated 16 controlled studies of the Joplin Plan for cross-grade grouping in one or two subjects. Twelve of those studies found higher achievement levels in the Joplin Plan classes. Two Joplin Plan studies reported effect sizes for different ability levels separately. A median effect size of .12 was reported for the high achieving group, — .01 for the middle group, and .29 for the low achieving group (Kulik & Kulik). Besides, Slavin (1987) found a median effect size of .45 for Joplin Plan grouping, while Rogers (1991) noted average effect sizes of .34. Additionally, Mills et al. (1994) found large effect sizes ($ES = 2.4 SD$) for fifth graders enrolled in a Joplin-like, flexibly-paced mathematics course with appropriate curricular adjustment.

Tieso (2004) showed that Slavin (1987) found significant, moderate effect sizes ($ES = .41$) and Kulik (1992) small average effect sizes ($ES = .25$) for within-class (flexible) grouping. Nine of Kulik's eleven studies reported higher overall achievement levels with flexible grouping arrangements (average $ES = .25$) over whole class instruction. And Lou et al. (1996) found average effect sizes of +.17 in a meta-analysis of within-class grouping versus no grouping. In comparisons of heterogeneous versus homogeneous within-class grouping, they found average effect sizes of +.12 for homogeneous grouping. Tieso showed that Slavin argued that research on within-class grouping in mathematics "consistently supports this practice in upper elementary grades" (p. 320), and he also contended that "there is no evidence to suggest that achievement gains due to within-class ability grouping in mathematics are achieved at the expense of low achievers" (p.

320). Little research, however, existed that compares whole class, between-class, and within-class flexible grouping arrangements in terms of student achievement.

In fact, placement teaching on ability grouping can not guarantee learning and teaching efficiency because there are many factors related to teaching and learning efficiency. Goethals (2001) indicated that students in the top and bottom half performed similarly over all, but that students performed better in homogeneous groups, whether those groups were made up of students from the top or bottom halves of the class. And, Chisaka (2002) showed that ability grouping had a negative effect on the instruction and learning of learners in low-ability classes and on the social relationships of these students and those in high-ability classes. Moreover, Cheng et al. (2008) stated that group heterogeneity was not a determinant factor in students' learning efficacy. Instead, the quality of group processes played a pivotal role because both high and low achievers were able to benefit when group processes were of high quality. In other words, it is important to group students appropriately in order to get students' learning efficiency.

Despite placement teaching on ability grouping is not perfect, at least, it has brought some teaching efficiency and pays more attention to students' needs and abilities. For example, DiMartino et al. (2005) showed that although ability grouping created greater efficiency and ease for teachers and students learned better and felt more positive about themselves, studies showed that it didn't benefit the great majority of students. Hallam et al. (2006) stated that the key reason given for teaching on ability grouping was that it enabled work to be matched to learning needs. And, Danzi et al.(2008) found that in their study, the teacher researchers recommended the continuance of Differentiated Instruction due to the teaching efficiency. Moreover, Levy (2008) also indicated that through the use of differentiated instruction strategies, educators can meet the needs of all students and help them to meet and exceed the established standards.

III. Methodology

1. Subjects

The subjects were all from Meiho Institution of Technology, including 475 freshmen in 2007, and 471 freshmen in 2008. General English was a required course for all of them, and Meiho Institution of Technology began to implement English ability grouping teaching in 2005.

2. Instrumentation and Procedure

The researcher conducted the project by employing a questionnaire.

Based on the researchers' teaching background, experience, and literature review, the researcher designed a questionnaire of English ability grouping teaching. Then, the questionnaire was inspected by three English experts who teach English in university. According to the experts' suggestions, the researcher revised the items in the questionnaire (shown as Appendix I). The questionnaire includes two parts; Part A is about personal information; such as gender and major, and Part B consists of 15 questions about English ability grouping teaching. The researcher employed the questionnaire to elicit subjects' reported frequency of opinions about English ability grouping teaching in 2007 and 2008, respectively.

3. Data Analysis:

To elicit the frequency of subjects' opinions about English ability grouping teaching, the researcher collected the data from the questionnaire in 2007 and 2008, and then employed descriptive statistics (mean and SD). Next the researcher compared and analyzed the data in 2007 and 2008.

IV. Finding and Discussion

1. The comparison of the results in 2007 and 2008

Table 1: the summary of subjects' major in 2007 & 2008

	Business & Management College	Health Nursing College	Human Ecology College	total
2007	126(26.5%)	91(19.2%)	258(54.3%)	475
2008	137(29.1%)	87(18.5%)	245(52%)	471

Based on table 1, both in 2007 and 2008, over half of the subjects came from humanity school; about one-fifth of the subjects came from nursing school, and over one-fourth of the subjects came from business school. It seems that there were no significant difference between 2007 and 2008 on subjects' major. In Meihu Institute of Technology, business and management college includes department of business management, information management, finance and tax; health nursing college includes department of nursing, beauty science, biological science and technology, food science and nutrition, and health business administration; human ecology college includes department of social work, early childhood care and education, applied foreign languages, recreation sports and health promotion, hospitality management, gemology, and cultural business development.

Table 2: the summary of subjects' gender in 2007 & 2008

	male	female	total

2007	271 (57.1%)	204 (42.9%)	475
2008	198(42%)	273(58%)	471

As can be seen from table 2, in 2007 there were 271 males and 204 females in the study, and in 2008 there were 198 males and 273 females in the study. In other words, in 2007 males were a little more than females, but in 2008 females were a little more than males.

Table 3: the summary of subjects' opinions about the necessity of applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	374(78.7%)	49(10.3%)	50(10.5%)	474
2008	369(78.3)	50(10.6%)	52(11%)	471

As shown in Table 3, over three-fourth of the subjects thought it is necessary to apply English ability grouping teaching both in 2007 and 2008. Comparing the two results, it can be seen that there were no significant differences in 2007 and 2008. That is to say, most subjects held a positive attitude toward English ability grouping teaching.

Table 4: the summary of subjects' opinions about the use of applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	369(77.7%)	60(12.6%)	46(9.6%)	475
2008	366(77.7%)	60(12.7%)	45(9.6%)	471

Table 4 indicated over three-fourth of the subjects thought English ability grouping teaching is good for their study. That is, most subjects hold a positive attitude toward English ability grouping teaching.

Table 5: the summary of subjects' preference of applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	310(65.3%)	101(21.3%)	64(13.5%)	475
2008	285(60.5%)	115(24.4%)	71(15.1%)	471

It can be seen from the data in table 5, over half of the subjects prefer English ability grouping teaching both in 2007 and 2008. However, over one-fifth of the subjects don't like English ability grouping teaching.

Table 6: the summary of subjects' opinions about increasing sense of achievement by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	233(49.2%)	147(30.9%)	94(19.8%)	474
2008	229(48.6%)	155(32.9%)	87(18.5%)	471

From table 6 we can see that near half of the subjects thought English ability grouping teaching can increase their sense of achievement. However, many subjects still thought English ability grouping teaching has nothing to do with their sense of accomplishment.

Table 7: the summary of subjects' opinions about increasing confidence by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	219(46.1%)	153(32.2%)	103(21.7%)	475
2008	239(50.7%)	139(29.5%)	93(19.7%)	471

Table 7 illustrates about half of the subjects thought English ability grouping teaching can increase their self-confidence. In other words, English ability grouping teaching seems to promote learners' learning efficacy.

Table 8: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving English by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	272(57.3%)	115(24.2%)	87(18.3%)	475
2008	283(60.1%)	97(20.6%)	91(19.3%)	471

Table 8 shows most subjects thought English ability grouping teaching can improve their English. That is to say, most subjects held a positive attitude toward English ability grouping teaching.

Table 9: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving GEPT test by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	262(55.2%)	92(19.4%)	112(23.6%)	475
2008	285(60.5%)	83(17.6%)	103(21.9%)	471

Based on Table 9, over half of those surveyed reported that English ability grouping teaching is beneficial for their GEPT test. However, over one-half of the subjects thought English ability grouping teaching did not have impact on their GEPT test.

Table 10: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving English listening by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	414(87.2%)	36(7.6%)	22(4.6%)	475
2008	400(84.9%)	41(8.7%)	30(6.4%)	471

According to table 10, the majority of respondents felt that English ability grouping teaching can improve their English listening. A minority of participants indicated that English ability grouping teaching can't promote their English listening.

Table 11: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving English speaking by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	424(89.3%)	32(6.7%)	18(3.8%)	475
2008	412(87.5%)	36(7.6%)	23(4.9%)	471

Table 11 illustrates that approximately 90% of those subjects felt that English ability grouping teaching can improve their English speaking. Less than 5% of those surveyed reported that English ability grouping teaching cannot enhance their English speaking.

Table 12: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving English reading by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	433(91.2%)	26(5.5%)	15(3.2%)	475
2008	422(89.6%)	25(5.3%)	24(5.1%)	471

Table 12 shows that the majority of respondents felt English ability grouping teaching can improve their English reading. Only a small number of respondents indicated that English ability grouping teaching cannot promote their English reading.

Table 13: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving English writing by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	436(91.8%)	21(4.4%)	18(3.8%)	475
2008	434(92.1%)	16(3.4%)	21(4.5%)	471

Table 13 shows that over 90% of subjects felt that English ability grouping teaching can improve their English writing. Only a small number of respondents indicated that English ability grouping teaching can't increase their English writing.

Table 14: the summary of subjects' opinions about improving English grammar by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	377(79.4%)	58(12.2%)	37(7.8%)	475
2008	377(80%)	50(10.6%)	44(9.3%)	471

Table 14 indicates that approximately 80% of those surveyed felt that English ability grouping teaching can improve their English grammar. A small number of participants indicated that English ability grouping teaching is not good for their English grammar.

Table 15: the summary of subjects' opinions about job-hunting by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	410(86.3%)	30(6.3%)	33(6.9%)	475
2008	421(89.4%)	26(5.5%)	24(5.1%)	471

Table 15 shows that over 85% of participants felt English ability grouping teaching is good for job-hunting in the future. Only a small number of respondents did not think so.

Table 16: the summary of subjects' opinions about study advanced by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	407(85.7%)	29(6.1%)	38(8%)	475
2008	425(90.2%)	27(5.7%)	19(4%)	471

Table 16 indicates that the majority of respondents felt English ability grouping teaching is useful for them to study advanced. Only a small number of participants indicated English ability grouping teaching is not helpful when studying advanced.

Table 17: the summary of subjects' opinions about globalization by applying English ability grouping teaching

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
2007	353(74.3%)	61(12.8%)	60(12.6%)	475
2008	382(81.1%)	51(10.8%)	38(8.1%)	471

Table 17 shows that most subjects felt English ability grouping teaching is good for them to be a member of global village. A minority of participants indicated that English ability grouping teaching is not helpful for them to become a part of global village.

2. Finding and discussion

According to the above tables, the researcher got the information as follows.

1. Near 80% of subjects think it is necessary to apply English placement teaching on ability grouping. In other words, students positively think English placement teaching on ability grouping is helpful when learning English.
2. Near 80% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping is beneficial to them. That is, they think they can learn under this kind of teaching because the teaching materials are not too difficult or too easy for them.
3. Near 50% of subjects prefer English placement teaching on ability grouping. In other words, most subjects more like English placement teaching on ability grouping than English teaching in multileveled class because they can learn from the teaching materials more suitable to them.
4. Near 50% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping make them have a sense of achievement, and near 20% subjects don't think they get sense of accomplishment from English placement teaching on ability grouping. In fact, although only near half of subjects get sense of achievement from English placement teaching on ability grouping, at least, it begins to bring students successful learning experience.
5. About half of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping makes them get confidence again in English learning. And near 20% subjects still cannot get confidence in English learning. However, at least half of subjects are willing to face English instead of evading learning English.
6. About 60% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can enhance their English proficiency and about 20% subjects think their English competence will be promoted under this kind of teaching.
7. About 60% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them get a GEPT (elementary level) certificate. In other words, over half of subjects realize that possessing an English proficiency certificate is important and necessary, and English placement teaching on ability grouping makes them learn more efficiently.
8. Over 80% of subjects think they need to improve their English listening ability. In fact, it is not easy for a student to improve their English listening ability just depending on classroom instruction. And English is a foreign language but not a second language in Taiwan; therefore, if a learner wants to

improve his /her English listening ability, he/she needs to expose to English environment as possible as he/she can.

9. Near 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them improve their English speaking ability. Just like listening ability, improving speaking ability also needs a long time exposure to English environment for a second language learner, and English placement teaching on ability grouping makes students have appropriate learning materials to learn.

10. About 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them improve their English reading ability. Nowadays, the world is like a global village, and English is the most popular communicative tool. Therefore, if a person wants to get the latest information in the world, it is essential for him/her to have good English reading competence.

11. Over 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them improve their English writing ability. Now is an information era; a lot of information is conveyed by internet, such as email. Similarly, English is the most common language to use. Thus, English writing ability plays a critical role in this era.

12. About 80% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them learn English grammar. In fact, grammar includes phonetics, semantics, phonology, syntax, and lexicon. If a learner wants to enhance his/her English proficiency, he/she would realize the importance of English grammar.

13. Almost 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them get a good job in the future. Nowadays, the world is just like a global village. A lot of jobs involved in the international market. Therefore, English plays a critical role in job hunting.

14. Near 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them study advanced. A lot of advanced knowledge and information is transmitted in English; therefore, if a person wants to study advanced, English reading comprehension is very important.

15. Over 74% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them be a member of global village. English is a global language for people speaking different languages to communicate with each other. Therefore, to be a member of a global village, English seems to be essential.

V. Conclusion

In this study, the researcher draws the following conclusion according to

their finding and discussion.

1. Near 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them improve their English writing ability and study advanced.
2. Almost 90% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them improve their English speaking and reading abilities in order to get a good job in the future.
3. Near 80% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can help them improve their English grammar. Moreover, over 80% of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping can enhance their English listening ability, and help them become a member of global village.
4. About 60% of subjects prefer English placement teaching on ability grouping, and think this kind of teaching can enhance their English proficiency, and can help them get a GEPT (elementary level) certificate.
5. About half of subjects think English placement teaching on ability grouping makes them get confidence again in English learning, and think English placement teaching on ability grouping make them have a sense of achievement.

In general speaking, the subjects believe English placement teaching on ability grouping has positive effects on English teaching and learning. Although most of the subjects' English background is not so good, they get confidence and sense of achievement from English placement teaching on ability grouping. Not to mention the learning efficiency, at least when a learner get confidence or sense of accomplishment, that will become his/her learning motivation.

VI. Implications

Without doubt, learning motivation is the trigger to learn. A lot of students, especially low- and intermediate-ability ones, lost their confidence and desire in a multi-leveled class, because they could not experience success. Hess (2001) stated variety is important in all teaching and students cannot concentrate on an activity for more than a limited length of time. Variety is extremely important in provoking interest within large groups of students. Without correct pacing, we can lose control and make our students either bored or frustrated. Each class has different demands for pacing, and only careful observation can teach us just what kind of pace to set for our students. In a large class, interest is particularly important because as soon as a group of students loses interest, they are likely to either cause trouble or create the kind of distraction that will focus on them rather on the lesson.

According to the conclusion, the researcher offers some implications to English teachers and the related authority.

1. Pay more attention to students' ability to get better learning efficiency.
2. Adopt various teaching materials to meet students' needs in accordance with students' aptitude.
3. Learning motivation is more important than learning efficiency. The higher learning motivation, the higher learning efficiency.
4. Create opportunities for students to experience success and give students encourage and praise. Sense of accomplishment is an important incentive for learning.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire of Freshman English placement teaching on ability grouping in Taiwan

A. Background information

What is your major? business and management college health nursing college human ecology college others _____

What is your gender? male female

B. Please answer the following questions based on your experience.

1. I think it is necessary to apply English placement teaching on ability grouping. Yes No I don't know.
2. English placement teaching on ability grouping is good for students. Yes No I don't know.
3. I prefer English placement teaching on ability grouping. Yes No I don't know.
4. English placement teaching on ability grouping makes me have more sense of achievement in English learning. Yes No I don't know.
5. English placement teaching on ability grouping makes me be confident again in English learning. Yes No I don't know.
6. English placement teaching on ability grouping can enhance my English proficiency. Yes No I don't know.
7. English placement teaching on ability grouping is helpful for freshmen to get GEPT elementary certificate. Yes No I don't know.
8. English placement teaching on ability grouping is beneficial to my English listening ability. Yes No I don't know.
9. English placement teaching on ability grouping is beneficial to my English speaking ability. Yes No I don't know.
10. English placement teaching on ability grouping is beneficial to my English reading ability. Yes No I don't know.
11. English placement teaching on ability grouping is beneficial to my English writing ability. Yes No I don't know.
12. English placement teaching on ability grouping is beneficial to my English grammar. Yes No I don't know.
13. English placement teaching on ability grouping can help me improve my English abilities to hunt a job in the future. Yes No I don't know.
14. English placement teaching on ability grouping can help me improve my

English abilities to study advanced.

Yes No I don't know.

15. English placement teaching on ability grouping can help me be a member of global village. Yes No I don't know.

南台灣技專校院學生對英文分級教學之意見調查—以

美和科大為例

黎瓊麗¹

摘要

近年來，爲了提升學生的英文能力，幾乎各大專校院致力於英語教學的成效，許多學校由於班級人數眾多且學生英文能力參差不齊，因此要達到英文老師的預期教學目標是不容易的事，事實上，老師在教授英文能力不一的大班級時，對老師及學生而言都是相當煎熬的事，並且教學成效與學習成效都不盡人意，因此，數年前一些大專校院開始實施英文能力分級教學，或許這可說是解決當前英文教學與學習成效不彰的另一個方法，本研究之目的在了解技職校院新生對於英文能分級教學的看法，以及他們對於英語教學的期許，首先，研究者依據其多年的教學經驗及教學現況設計一份英文能力分級教學的問卷，設計完成之間卷由三位資深的英文教師進行審視，研究者並依三位教師之意見做最後修正，接著，研究者以其任教之學校學生當成研究對象，分別在 2007 年及 2008 年進行問卷調查，之後根據所收集到的資料進行分析比較，最後根據調查結果提出結論與英語教學上的建議。

關鍵詞：英文能力，問卷，成效，英文分級教學

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