



## Proportion of Using English in College Instructional Design in China

GUO Min<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Associate professor. School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Petroleum University, Daqing, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Supported by a grant from the Project of the Office of Education in Heilongjiang Province (No.12522010).

Received 31 October 2013; accepted 7 February 2014

### Abstract

Instructional languages design is an important step in a second language teaching process. Teaching English, as a second language, in a non-native English speaking country is quite different from that in native English speaking countries. Since teaching language is the main carrier of information and tool of communication, what's the proportion of using English in choosing classroom instructional language? Is there a different effect on learners if teachers use English out of proportion? For most learners in China, Chinese is their mother language, how much Chinese should be used in teaching and how about the evaluation on learners...so many questions. Going through two-year-experiment on the proportion of English and Chinese, we arrive at the conclusion: seventy percent of English input in classroom instructional language design is the best, which in somewhat comply with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the result we got is that the better the learners' level, the higher of the proportion is better. The method we used includes questionnaire and interview, with the data collected and analyzed by SPSS17.0.

**Key words:** Instructional language; Language input; Proportion

GUO Min (2014). Proportion of Using English in College Instructional Design in China. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 8(1), 76-79. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/j.sll.1923156320140801.4160> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.sll.1923156320140801.4160>

### INTRODUCTION

Instructional Design (also called Instructional System Design), is the practice of creating "instructional experiences which make the acquisition of knowledge and skill more efficient, effective, and appealing" (Merrill, Drake, L., Lacy, Pratt, & ID2 Research Group, 1996, pp.5-7). It is a kind of systematic process, in which language plays a role of a tool or carrier of information and communication. The classroom instructional language here is not defined as its two ways of expression (verbal and non-verbal) in broad sense, but the proportion of English and Chinese in English classroom teaching in the college of China.

In second language classroom teaching is quite different from native language teaching. English is a kind of language itself, even if Chinese English teachers or instructors are able to express English smoothly and perfectly, there are still some items or expressions can not express exactly as native speaker, as for students they can not understand completely what the teacher said; meanwhile, in language teaching classroom, the teacher cannot speak all Chinese, which is not good for students to get language acquisition in Chinese situational atmosphere. So using appropriate proportion of English is very important.

To deepen this research, a two-year-experimental project (No.12555010) was on its way and got supported by Department of Education of Heilongjiang province. One of the experiments is to study the proportion of English and Chinese in English classroom teaching and its effects.

### 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In second language learning, the most influential theory is Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. According to his language acquisition theory, Language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquires are not usually away of the fact that they are acquiring

language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication. The result of language acquisition, acquired competence, is also subconscious. We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a “feel” for correctness. Grammatical sentences sound right or feel right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated (Krashen, 1982, p.14).

Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis; the Monitor hypothesis; the Natural Order hypothesis; the Input hypothesis; and the Affective Filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1981). The input hypothesis, also known as the monitor model, was first published in 1977. 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. So, the Input hypothesis is only concerned with “acquisition”, not “learning”. 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 syllabus, ensuring in this way that each learner will receive some “i + 1” input that is appropriate for his/her current stage of linguistic competence (Schütz Ricardo, 2007).

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

### 2.1 Questionnaires

Likert Scale is used in questionnaires, Likert-type or frequency scales use fixed choice response formats and

**Table 1**  
**Experimental Sample**

Class		Number	T-input EP	S-output EP	T-feedback EP
Controlling Class	A	28	50%	100%	50%
Experimental Class 1	B	28	70%	100%	70%
Experimental Class 2	C	29	90%	100%	90%

\*T-input EP: English Proportion of Teacher’s Input  
 S-output EP: English Proportion of Student’s Output  
 T-feedback EP: English Proportion of Teacher’s Feedback

Table 1 is experimental sample, Class A, also called Controlling Class. There are 28 students in it; Class B is Experimental Class 1 with 28 students; Class C is Experimental Class 2 with 29 students.

Teachers chosen: three teachers with same educational background with experiences of learning abroad and they can speak English fluently as native speakers.

are designed to measure attitudes or opinions (Bowling, 1997, Burns & Grove, 1997). It is five responses from (A) Strongly agree, (B) agree, (C) don’t know, to (D) disagree, and (E) strongly disagree that we used, on considering the frequency, we use different words, for example, from (A) never to (E)often, etc. The purpose we do questionnaires is to know about students’ expectation on teachers’ frequency of speaking English and Chinese and also to know the effects on students. The statistics is calculated by statistical software SPSS17.0

According to the purpose of research and the feasibility of the survey, we choose 6 classes in grade of 2009, as samples. There are 2 classes from Oil and Natural Gas Engineering, 2 classes from Geophysics, and 2 classes from Geological Resources Prospecting and Exploration; and we choose 6 classes in the grade of 2010. There are 2 classes from College of Petroleum Engineering, 1 class from College of Civil Engineering, 1 class from College of Chemical Engineering, 1 class from College of Electrical Engineering and 1 from School of Business Administration, all together there is 330 students as participants, in which the valid number of boys is 210 (65.83%), and the valid number of girls is 109 (34.17%). We handed out 52 questionnaires for teachers, and get back 50 pieces in valid, that is 96.1 percent, among which, valid male teacher number is 14, and female teacher number is 36.

Q1: The students’ expectation to teachers’ speaking English

Q2: The students’ expectation to teachers’ speaking Chinese

### 2.2 Teaching Experiment

Classes chosen: we choose three classes in School of Mechanical Engineering non-randomly, and name them Class A, Class B and Class C. The English achievement in their first English entrance test (the full mark is 100) is almost in the same level. The average score in Class A is 63.17, Class B is 63.48, and Class C is 64.03. See table 1.

Teaching materials: from Band 1 to Band 4 for four academic terms with two years, students hold 5 to 6 academic hours of English learning for each week. In intensive reading class, the material we use is *New Horizon College English* (second edition) Published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. In English listening class, the material is *Learning to speak*:

An English video course (third edition) published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Evaluation: using criteria, in the form of test and teachers' evaluation to students

### 3. ANALYSES OF RESULTS

#### 3.1 Analysis of Questionnaires

Table 2 is students' expectation to teachers' speaking Chinese, the results are from questionnaire 1 (Q1). Table 3 is students' expectation to teachers' speaking English, the results are from questionnaire (Q2).

**Table 2**  
Students' Expectation to Teachers' Speaking Chinese

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Never	21	6.6	6.6	6.6
Occasionally	103	32.3	32.3	38.9
Sometimes	127	39.8	39.8	78.7
Often	55	17.2	17.2	95.9
Always	13	4.1	4.1	100
Total	319	100	100	

**Table 3**  
Students' Expectation to Teachers' Speaking English

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Never	7	2.2	2.2	2.2
Occasionally	16	5	5	7.2
Sometimes	45	14.1	14.1	21.3
Often	181	56.7	56.7	78.1
Always	70	21.9	21.9	100
Total	319	100	100	

Since we want to know if there are differences among students of different English level, we classified them into higher, middle, lower group, so three variables are relevant, we use ANOVA analysis. There are 23 questions, and the responses are quite different from that in three group. For example, on the question of frequency, three groups show us obvious differences: English expectations ( $F = 5.43; P = 0.005 < 0.005$ ).

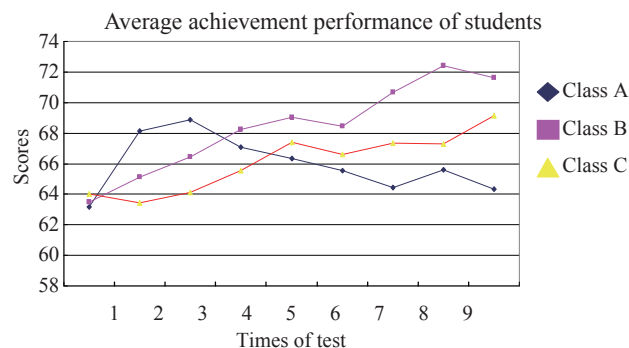
From above, we know that for most Chinese students, the appropriate Chinese input is accepted. Then what is the best proportion of English and Chinese?

#### 3.2 Teaching Experimental Result

Figure 1 is academic test statistics of students in Class A.B.C. There are 9 times of exams, including the first entrance test and the test score is from 58 to 74.

Variable frequency in table 2 shows that 127 students hope the teacher "sometimes" use Chinese in class, accounted for 39.8%, "Always" using Chinese has 13 students, accounts for 6.6%, which is not accepted by most students. Most participants said that the surrounding around them was all in Chinese, they have little chance to create an English situational atmosphere, except in English class, so they hope teachers can speak more English but explain some difficult professional terms in Chinese, and Chinese speaking should be just "right".

Variable frequency shows that teachers should often speaking English in class, the overall average (Mean) is 3.91 point. 181 students hope the teacher "sometimes" use Chinese in class, accounted for 56.7%.



**Figure 1**  
The Test Statistics

From figure 1, we can know that there are mainly three periods, adjustment (1-3 terms), adaptation (3-6 terms) and maturation period (6-9 terms) in two-year-English

study. In adjustment, the score of Class A is better than Class B and Class C, 50 percent English input is better than 70 percent and 90 percent, and the situation last for the whole term. In adaptation period, students get used to college life and study, passive study becomes active study, so the score of 50 percent English input lower down, and the score of 70 percent and 90 percent of English input is steadily going up. From the whole, 70 percent input is better than 90 percent input.

---

## CONCLUSION

---

We may draw the conclusion that mother language is very important in second language teaching. Questionnaires and Experimental results show that we should not overlook the role of mother tongue which is to be considered to be crucial effect on second language teacher. Due to the limitation of brain of accepting information, especially the influence of native language environment, so the teachers' teaching language input must be comprehensible input. If teachers provide difficult knowledge or information beyond a certain range, students will lose confidence to learn, for it is too high for students to challenge.

Experimental results show that in the primary stage or in adjustment period of learning foreign language for college students, 50% of the English language input proportion is appropriate, but period should not be too long, once the students get used to college learning and go to the adaptation period, teaching strategy should be adjusted to it. The academic performance shows that when the proportion of English is 70 percent, students can accept and understand the input best. With the passage of time, the English language input can be appropriately increased to 90 percent.

There are still some points we should pay attention when designing the whole process:

First, teachers should use mother language and second language effectively and accurately, and let students know the differences of difference language and culture. When we learn or acquire language, we should first know the background of the language. Teachers should create English situation in class or stimulate the situation of English communication as possible.

Second, teachers should input English according to students' English level, and the proportion is not static. The main principle is to observe the responses of students and adjust accordingly.

Third, student's attention time focusing on teachers is about 20 minutes, according to our teaching experience and observation; students should be the teaching center, teacher the guide. So being a teacher, he or she can not describe teaching materials by using one hundred percent English or second language, especially when interpreting narrative and declarative knowledge, students' attention is easy to disperse. For students are sensitive to their mother tongue, it can be a reminder of attention

In addition, nonverbal expression in teaching language is also very important auxiliary form, especially in college English classroom. In the event of a speech impediment, a gesture, eye contact can express clearly. So teachers should make good use of that language, too.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Bowling, A. (1997). *Research methods in health*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (1997). *The practice of nursing research conduct, critique, & utilization*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders and Co..
- Byram, M. (2001). *Routledge encyclopedia of language teaching and learning* (pp.413-415). Taylor & Francis.
- Krashen, S.(1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition* (pp.11-15). Oxford/New York: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S. (1977). *Some issues relating to the monitor model*. In Brown, H. Douglas, Yorio, Carlos Alfredo, Crymes & Ruth (1977, April 26-May 1). *Teaching and learning English as a second language: Trends in research and practice on tesol '77: Selected papers from the eleventh annual convention of teachers of English to speakers of other languages* (pp.144-158). Miami, Florida.
- Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Archives of Psychology*, 140, 1-55
- Merrill, M. D., Drake, L., Lacy, M. J., Pratt, J., & ID2\_Research\_Group. (1996). Reclaiming instructional design. *Educational Technology*, 36(5), 5-7.
- Schutz, R. (2007). *Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition*. Retrieved from <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html>