

淡江大學九十二學年度博士班招生考試試題

系別：英文學系

科目：英文作文

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本試題共 1 頁

Read the following message posted to an electronic forum for English teachers in Taiwan. Write a response (in about 400 words) to the discussion group to express your views on the issues raised by the author. Be cogent and specific in your response. (100%)

Much seems to be lost in the current discussion. Too much principle and not enough experience. Sometimes dipping into a mother tongue might well be useful. A very wise Chinese teacher of English (more exactly, a compiler of dictionaries) observed that nothing would happen for the better until the means used for testing English on the college entrance exam changed.

We do not test "language;" we test "facts" about language, i.e., mostly grammar, and some structure. We teach for the small minority that manages high-wire trapeze work (those few students who might make it into elite universities), long before they and everyone else feels comfortable walking on the ground. Why? Part of the answer is the linguistic competency of many teachers. How many Taiwan English teachers are themselves comfortable walking on the ground?

We teach for Silicon Valley -- or the Hsinchu Science Park -- while most of us are still down on the farm. Learning ground-level competency is a long, hard process, and few have the authority to state with some assurance that "this is how we say it." It is easy to state wrongly, and with that goes a lot of "face." But if one is teaching grammar, one merely has to memorize a good grammar book, and one will seldom, if ever, lose face. One may not be an authority oneself, but one has an "authority" on which one can rely for face. I fear current discussion of monolingual instruction is another way of talking about high-wire trapeze work, disguised in terms of five months this or that, dictionaries, classroom work....

How many of our native English speakers are prepared to explain the world in ground-level terms? Very few, is my impression. Ground-level competency means working in the target language, but the fluency assumed is very different than the fluency of high-wire work. We have been talking about monolingual instruction, but we are living in polylingual country with many native tongues: Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hokka, the aborigine languages, to name but a few. How should the foreign English fit into that linguistic salad?

What would it mean for our local educational system to move from high-wire English to basic on-the-ground competency? There is a freedom that comes with college teaching -- because one in general does not have to teach to, toward a test. But how much freedom does one have when we have to teach toward a certain philosophy, psychology of teaching? Our discussions must go much deeper, and much wider.