

# A Case Study of Chinese College Students' Attitudes Toward Only English-Medium Teaching in EFL Classrooms

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## Abstract

Facing the current situation that Chinese students are poor in English productive ability, the mode of only English-medium teaching is put forward to completely improve students' English abilities and comprehensive competence by creating second language acquisition atmosphere. Since few studies have been conducted on students' attitudes toward only English-medium teaching in ELT classrooms especially from the perspective of students themselves, this paper, through questionnaires and interviews, focuses on students' attitudes to figure out their preferences, evaluations and suggestions of teaching modes, and further discusses the practical application of only English-medium teaching in EFL classrooms from five respects: teaching purpose, course design, teacher' qualification, students' language level and teaching effect. It is concluded that only English-medium teaching is not of popularity among students giving their own English levels and the advancement of only English-medium teaching quality depends on the qualified teachers and suitable courses.

**Keywords:** English teaching, Teaching effect, Teacher qualification, Students' language level, Course design

## 1. Introduction

Only English-medium teaching means that teacher only uses English to lecture all the time without any other language in English classes. Only English-medium teaching should distinguish from bilingual education for it can be seen as an advanced level of bilingual education (Zhu, 2005). As Zhou (2011) put it, there are three modes of bilingual education. First is immersion programme which is actually the same with only English-medium teaching in classroom, it requires students to be taught in the language which they are learning, and the native language or mother tongue can not be used in teaching even on campus. Second is transitional bilingual education which requires that students are taught with native language or mother tongue in the first period of learning time and after a period of study, they should be taught in foreign language or second language which they are learning. Therefore, transitional bilingual education provides a period of time for students to adapt to the language they are learning. The purpose of transitional bilingual education is to transit to immersion programme. Third is maintenance bilingual education which requires students to be taught in native language in their first learning period and later native language is still used in their learning of some foreign language or second language subjects. Accordingly, college students who have received English education for at least six years before have received the first period of transitional bilingual education for a long time, and it is proper for them to transit to the immersion programme. That is to say, they are proper to be taught only in English in English courses.

English, undeniably, is an international language where no nation can afford to neglect if the nation wishes to climb the global economic, social and educational ladder, and to subsequently improve and enrich the lifestyle of its people (Yunusa and Herna, 2011, 2620). English as a key subject in China education system has been paid attention to for many years. At university, all students, "irrespective of their major area of study, are required to study the language not only to enter university but also to graduate" (Bolton and Graddol, 2012, 5). However, almost all of the students being forced to focus on English tests and being required to get high marks in each English test rather than practical skills result in that students are skillful at test-taking but poor in contextual application (Gao, 2011). Therefore, Chinese students' productive ability such as speaking and writing is of low level as well as their actual practical ability and cultural knowledge. And how to communicate in English becomes a big problem for Chinese students who understand English superficially. In such a case, only English-medium teaching in classes aiming at creating an English speaking

environment is called for to change the former teaching modes that Chinese language takes predominance in English courses. Whether English-medium teaching can be conducted effectively or not will not only influence student's personal language competence and future life but also our country's comprehensive national strength and international competence (Gao, 2001).

Many surveys have been done to test the effect of bilingual education (e.g. Liu, 2004; Chen, 2010). Their results show that students approve of being taught by teacher in both native language and foreign language and the teaching effect seems to work well. However, immersion programme, as the advanced level of bilingual education, is a more efficient teaching mode for college students who have received English education for a long period of time. The teaching mode they need should transit from transitional bilingual education to immersion programme. Gao (2001) states his opinion that only English-medium teaching does create the English atmosphere which is a very important element for students to learn efficiently, although there is no data collected from students to support it. The surveys of Liu (2004) and Chen (2010) focus on bilingual education to collect students' attitudes toward bilingual education and analyze its teaching effects in English classes, whereas they do not provide an objective option for students to take the other teaching mode of only English-medium teaching into consideration.

Based on the understanding of only English-medium teaching and investigation in studies in the same field, this paper starts to do a survey from the perspective of students' attitudes toward English teaching. 101 senior students majoring in English in China Three Gorges University participated in the questionnaire and two of them were interviewees chose randomly. This survey provides the most four frequently used teaching modes including "Teaching only in English", "Teaching mainly in English with Chinese to explain some difficult problems", "Teaching mainly in Chinese and seldom in English" and "Teaching only in Chinese" for students to choose which one they prefer, with the focus on students' attitudes toward only English-medium teaching. And then the survey offers eight single-choice questions and two multiple-choice questions together with one open question related to only English-medium teaching for them to select and answer. With the data collected, this paper does analysis from five aspects: teaching purpose, course design, teachers' qualification, students' language level and teaching effect. Students' self-understanding of their English levels will be combined with their preferences for teaching modes to get practical results, and finally the practical results will be analyzed in combination with related teaching theories to conclude students' attitudes toward teaching modes. The final conclusion is drawn to two main points. First is that almost all of the students do not endorse only English-medium teaching in classrooms because of their own limited language levels. They feel difficult in comprehending what teachers convey and entail strenuous effort to keep pace with teacher. Bilingual education is easier for them to understand the teaching contents all the time. Second is that only English-medium teaching should be adopted by qualified teachers in practical courses. Unqualified teachers could not get effective teaching effects for one reason that students cannot understand their expression especially of professional genres. For professional courses of which teaching purposes are to deepen professional knowledge, only English-medium teaching is not suitable. The most suitable course for students to be taught in English only is the practical course aiming at improving students' language abilities or communicating abilities.

## **2. Understanding of Only English-Medium Teaching**

### *2.1 Advantages of Only English-Medium Teaching*

As the advanced level of bilingual language education, only English-medium teaching is of many advantages for college English courses, especially courses provided to English major students. Only English-medium teaching creates the English learning atmosphere to motivate students to learn initiatively so as to help students practice and memorize in their mind and develop English thinking way to speak and write more authentic English (Gao, 2001).

#### *2.1.1 Creating English Learning Atmosphere*

Linguistic environment plays an important role in language acquisition and language learning (Song, 2011). Chinese people can master Chinese well without any efforts to study is because that they are in the environment of Chinese language, they can pick up the language sparing no efforts. Hence if the English language environment can be created, students must master English language for a period of time. The main advantage of only English-medium teaching is to create the listening atmosphere where students listen first and gradually speak. After a period of listening, students can speak naturally and make basic communications (Gao, 2001). Babies are born without ability to speak, they listen first and three or five years later they start to speak (Werker and Heinlein, 2012). Owing to the language atmosphere, the baby is involved in the environment and quickly gets the language. After that, they are sent to schools to learn more grammars and words to speak. Chinese college students learned English for above six years but they still cannot use it to communicate because they are not in the English environment where they need to and have to speak in English. The class in English environment created by teaching only in English is eagerly needed to drive the students into the world of English and force them to be active in speaking English.

#### *2.1.2 Training Memory*

English learning needs students to memorize, and the basis of English thinking is to store a large number of vocabularies and phrases which are realized by memorizing (Gao, 2001). The key issue of memorization is to repeat and it is said that repetition is the mother of memorizing. English learning needs continuing practices. In only English-medium courses, teachers constantly repeating what students have learned before and what they are going to learn provide multiple opportunities for students to listen and memorize. This kind of memorizing is not on purpose but an unintended way to follow teachers to repeat (Gao, 2001). In Chinese high school, students are required to recite

vocabularies and texts and they are always taken dictation and recitation. But in college, this kind of dictation and recitation has passed out of existence. Those students with high consciousness may require themselves to do memories, while those without self-request have no opportunity to memorize English language. Courses taught in English repeatedly to impress language points and vocabularies on students' mind and stimulate their brain to think and understand. This automatically memory technique undoubtedly becomes an efficient way to keep a language in mind and provide opportunities for those without consciousness to memory and learn.

### 2.1.3 Developing English Thinking Mode

English thinking is the basis of fluent English expression (Gao, 2001). As for Chinese students whose thinking mode is quite different from English thinking mode, it is very difficult for them to achieve absolute English thinking mode. The thinking mode of Chinese people is from macro to micro and from the entirety to individuals and from general to specific (Sun and Gai, 2005). On the contrary, the person who speaks English gets used to think from individual to entirety and from specific to general and from micro to macro (Sun and Gai, 2005). For example, the address in English is written NO.3, Block 2, Jilong Timber Market, Da Lingsha Town, Dongguan City, Guangdong Province, China. While in China the address is written upside down. If we want to listen and speak in English well, we should adopt the English thinking mode. However, thinking mode is long-term developed in society and it has already been fixed up, and changing into another thinking mode is like jet lag (Sun and Gai, 2005) to turn oneself into another habits. Only English-medium teaching class is created to cultivate students' thinking modes by developing their language sense and imagination (Gao, 2001). Language sense mainly depends on listening. After the long-term accumulations of listening and reading, the language sense can be cultivated. And in the process of accumulation, students associate with what they have learned before and explore the new ideas to improve their understanding and imagination (Gao, 2001). Only English-medium teaching is more effective to have the students involved in classes and have better effects.

### 2.2 Problems of Only English-Medium Teaching

Although only English-medium teaching provides many advantages for students to learn English, there are still many elements that influence the efficiency of only English-medium teaching. First, the condition of teacher and students who are the two sides of a class is the largest influential problem to affect teaching effects. Teacher with a low English level or students with little enthusiasm would destroy the process of a course (Li, 2013). Besides, only English-medium teaching is not suitable for all courses varying in contents and teaching purposes. It is of much significance to choose the most suitable course like practical course for the purpose of language skills training to conduct this teaching mode. Furthermore, if all the courses were conducted only in English and even the campus were totally immersed in English atmosphere, students who are always educated foreign country's culture would gradually worship English culture and neglect their own culture. Only English-medium teaching has a big threat to develop students' pufferies of foreign culture (Sun and Gai, 2005) and what's worse, neglect of their own Chinese identity.

#### 2.2.1 Teacher's and Students' Condition Influence Effects

Teachers and students are the two parts in a course. Only teachers who serve as the conductors equip with high English levels do they have the ability to run the class freely and achieve high teaching quality in only English-medium teaching (Gu and Dong, 2005). However, nowadays there are not enough teachers who have the ability to teach only in English in classes well (Li, 2013; Chen, 2010; Zhu, 2005). Teachers' oral English, way of speaking and teaching methods all influence the teaching effects. Some teachers who are of rich professional knowledge and teaching experiences but of low English application ability would not perform well as before, and maybe the previous interesting teaching is changed into boring lecturing. If they are worrying about oral or grammar mistakes and depending on the power-point during class, they would have no communications and interactions with students and finally make the period of class in spiritless atmosphere. Some teachers with high professional levels and English language levels from abroad lack of rich teaching experiences which may cause that they cannot turn the boring professional knowledge into interesting points. How to build a group of qualified teachers with professional levels and English language abilities as well as abundant teaching experiences is the key presupposition to conduct effective English teaching (Li, 2013).

Students are the receivers of classes. Students in the same class are varied from one to another. Different levels of students are the main problems of teachers to master the teaching process. One language point which maybe difficult for those students with lower English abilities will be explained by teachers again and again in English for them to understand, while it is actually a waste of time for those students with higher language levels. Students' level is a main cause to influence the quality of only English-medium teaching, but the most important cause in the matter of students to influence teaching quality is students' intention to learn (Li, 2013). A majority of Chinese students lack of initiative to learn (Li, 2013). Teaching and learning is a process of interaction, so the active interaction of students in addition to the qualified teachers are the necessary conditions to improve the effect of only English-medium teaching. At present, few students are initiative to prepare lessons before class (Li, 2013). When teachers lecture in classes, the students who have prepared before can have a quick and correct understanding of the language points and knowledge (Li, 2013). In class activities, if students all are initiative to take part in it, the English learning atmosphere is easily to be created. Students' enthusiasm will also influence teacher to be more active in class. Students' initiative to learn will have a strong positive effect on the quality of learning and teaching. How to get students active in learning and interaction is the key problem to conduct only English-medium teaching.

#### 2.2.2 Different Courses Have Different Effects

In specialized courses, there are many professional vocabularies or professional language points or common words with special meanings which are hard to be understood if explained only in English to those whose mother language is Chinese. Actually, the difficulties may be not easily explained in Chinese, let alone in English. In general, graduates of non-English professions in China are required to master about 4200 vocabularies and English major students are required to master about 7500 (Sun and Gai, 2005). They may read newspaper or listen to newscast with such vocabulary but if they are required to listen to professional contents in higher education textbooks, they must be puzzled at many language points (Sun and Gai, 2005) and finally lose learning interests in this course. It is maybe even difficult for teachers to comprehend all the contents in textbook and then express them out accurately and clearly (Sun and Gai, 2005), how can students learn efficiently? Therefore, only English-medium teaching has influence on specialized courses and it may largely affect the teaching quality.

### 2.2.3 Unclear Teaching Purposes

Teaching purposes are the guides of teaching results and teaching jobs of college English education which set up rules of the basic standards and quality requirements for the talents cultivation and reflect the fundamental mission of English teaching and the anticipated goal of students struggling to achieve. Teaching purpose can regulate and control teaching activities and evaluate teaching levels and stimulate teaching responsibility (Wang, 2008). Actual teaching activity must lose its soul and direction if lacking specific professional English teaching purposes. Nowadays, many teachers are not clearly aware of the teaching purposes of whether improving students' language level or enriching students' professional knowledge (Wang, 2008). And some teachers are not clearly aware of the reason why they should conduct only English-medium teaching. They feel easy to teach in Chinese and students can easily get what they convey (Li, 2013) so that in English classes Chinese take the prominent status which actually can not improve students' English language ability effectively.

Each course has its own teaching purpose, for example, "Spoken English" course is to train students' speaking skills. In this kind of course, it will be of no significance if teaching in Chinese. While some courses like "Advanced English" which is a comprehensive course need teachers to evaluate and balance the language level and professional knowledge. Only make sure of the teaching purpose can a course achieve its teaching purpose.

### 2.2.4 Cater to English Supremacy

Students who are taught only in English tend to worship foreign things and fawn on foreign countries. And it is not good for students to develop the emotion of patriotism (Sun and Gai, 2005). Language is not only a tool for communication but also a carrier of culture. Sun and Gai (2005) have pointed that the common language used in a country can safeguard state sovereignty and national honor and make for the national and ethnic unity and the construction of social material civilization and spiritual civilization. Chinese is not only a language used for communication but also a symbol of personal identity and power for Chinese people (Qu, 2007). In classes if students are only taught in English and are only required to use English, it is very likely for them to worship foreign cultures and what's worse, produce an emotion of inferior quality of their own culture.

Only English-medium teaching caters to the English supremacy trend (Sun and Gai, 2005). English supremacy creates great threat to other countries' culture. Many languages are facing extinction today. The popularity of a language is mainly due to the country who speaks the language with strong economic power. Under the influence of American-led western strong military, economic, politic and cultural pressure and pragmatism, not a few ethics and countries give up their own ethnic languages to learn English and be proud of English. Their traditional language which is the carrier of traditional culture is gradually weakening until disappearing (Wang, 2013).

## 3. Background

At present, the teaching mode of only English-medium teaching is mainly discussed in a theoretical level instead of being examined by practical researches based on students' attitudes. Few practical examinations of teaching modes have been conducted on the basis of students' opinions. Only English-medium teaching among the English teaching modes aims at creating English listening and speaking atmosphere and providing the condition of second language acquisition for students. Gao (2001, 49) put forward the theory that only English-medium teaching could create English "listening condition" and increase the temperature of the English learning atmosphere and train students' thinking ability in a way of English. Only when a person is in a single language environment where this language is used in each area of social life especially the basic productive activity, the person will be forced to learn another language and communicate in the language effectively. Only in this condition, language learning and communication are combined together to achieve natural initiative learning of high efficiency (Ma, 1990). Only English-medium teaching is exactly the teaching environment created to achieve "this condition". However, the views of Gao(2001) and Ma(1990) are all the analysis of teaching in English in an aspect of theory so that they are lack of the support from practical examination.

Liu (2004) and Chen (2010) investigated in the basis of empirical survey that students of all majors and levels held positive attitudes toward bilingual education. Comparing with only English-medium teaching, bilingual teaching is more suitable for students' English levels and better for the improvement of students' English comprehensive ability. However their survey set up in the presupposition of acknowledgments of bilingual education, more precisely, the survey investigated students' adaptation to bilingual education and made feasibility analysis of bilingual education without the offer of any choice of teaching in English for any student who prefers it. Students are driven to evaluate bilingual education without any thought of teaching in English. In English education there exist debates between bilingual teaching and only English-medium teaching. Both Gao (2001) and Ma (1990) who discussed in a theoretical

aspect and Liu (2004) and Chen (2010) who tested in the practical level correctly stated their opinions and proved the importance of each side. However, the attitudes and opinions of students who serve as the main body receiving practical teaching can prove the practicalness and weakness of teaching theory and their self-condition and preferences for teaching modes (Chen, 2010). There are few studies were conducted on the perspective of students to analyze their subjective attitudes and feelings of teaching modes.

In terms of theory mentioned above, only English-medium teaching in English classes is the most effective learning way for college students among the teaching modes, while many practical surveys based on bilingual education show that students accept bilingual education to a large degree. Therefore, after comparing and analyzing most studies from other experts in the same field, this paper will take Chinese college students as the main subject to investigate their own attitudes toward teaching modes, especially only English-medium teaching in English classes.

#### 4. Methodology

This study focuses on Chinese college students' attitudes toward only English-medium teaching in class. Senior students majoring in English in China Three Gorges University were taken as a sample to understand their attitudes. We would draw on their understandings, feelings, suggestions and expectations of contemporary teaching methods and, further, analyze students' adaptation of only English-medium teaching in terms of what effects and drawbacks it has made.

The study recruited quantified participants to fill in questionnaires. Some of them took part in follow-up semi-structured interviews. All the participants volunteered to take part in this study. We promised the related information of any respondents would not be revealed and all the respondents were anonymous in answering the questionnaire. As soon as the results were analyzed, all the related questionnaires and notes would be destroyed for the interests of the participants.

The subjects of the study were senior English majors in Grade 2010, China Three Gorges University, accounting for a total of 136 persons. Ultimately the effective number was subject to the actual scrape. All the 136 persons have received courses of the same nature and have taught only in English by the same group of teachers.

The questionnaire is made up of ten multiple choices and one open question all in Chinese to better conveys the intent of study. The first eight questions are single-choice question with A, B, C, D four options respectively selected meaningful and complete data to the greatest extent. The last two questions are multiple-choice questions with A, B, C, D, E five possible options and F for free expression item. The main contents of these questions focus on students' acceptance and understanding of only English-medium teaching and their evaluation and expectations for teachers' spoken English and teaching contents, and their preferences and attitudes toward teaching modes as well as their English proficiency examination and requirements of themselves. The first question provide four teaching modes for students to choose including "Teaching only in English with English to explain difficult problems", "Teaching mainly in English but with Chinese to explain difficult problems", "Teaching mainly in Chinese and seldom in English" and "Teaching only in Chinese". The second and third questions, quoted from an online questionnaire of the study of immersion programme in South China University of Technology, are related to the teaching conditions. And the third one is made up for students' understanding of teaching purposes. The fifth, the sixth, the seventh and the eighth questions are set up to know students' attitudes toward different courses taught only in English and analyze students' levels. These courses given in these four questions are all the representatives of English major courses in China Three Gorges University. The last two multiple-choice questions are set up to get students' understanding of English teaching effects and problems. And the open question is mainly made up for students to freely express their attitudes and suggestions to make up the deficiencies of the first ten questions. All the questions strive to be objective without any preferences and bias and try to minimize inductivity to have the respondents express their views.

Two questionnaire respondents were randomly selected for follow-up interviews. One-to-one interview was conducted in Chinese in order to have better understanding of the respondents' attitudes by making them more free to express their views. The contents of the interview move around the basic content of the questionnaire to further explore their attitudes and expectations of teaching modes through the classification of respondents' views concerning their attitudes toward teachers and teaching quality and personal adaptation. And then a comparison was made between the results of the interviews and the questionnaires to figure out the intercommunity with its causes. Finally in accordance with all the results, the attitudes of college students toward only English-medium teaching were analyzed comprehensively. The results of interviews were discussed together with the data of questionnaires in the following part of results and discussions.

The actual scrap of the questionnaire was 101. The specific analysis method was conducted as the following four steps. First, the first eight one-choice questions were calculated the percentage, mean number and mode of each option respectively and classified with the statistical data to analyze relative thesis. Second, the last two multiple-choice questions were calculated the percentage, mean number and mode of each option respectively and were analyzed. Third, the answers to the open questions were classified and integrated and the key problems put forward by the students were sorted out. Finally, the first three parts of the survey were combined together with the results of interviews to be analyzed of the attitudes of students toward teaching purpose, course design, teachers' qualification, students' language level and teaching effect.

## 5. Results and Discussions

Most students support teaching mainly in English but with Chinese to explain difficulties. As seen in Table 5.1, in the 101 students there are 27 students who support teaching only in English and 74 who support teaching mainly in English with Chinese to explain some difficult problems and there are no person who support teaching mainly in Chinese or only in Chinese.

Table 5.1 The most support teaching modes in English course

	Student number
Teaching only in English with English to explain difficult problems	27
Teaching mainly in English but with Chinese to explain difficult problems	74
Teaching mainly in Chinese and seldom in English	0
Teaching only in Chinese	0

### 5.1 Teaching Purpose

On the understanding of the purpose of the courses taught only in English, students are clearly aware of the positivity of teaching in English. As seen in Table 5.2, 56 students think that the purpose of teaching in English is to improve the comprehensive English abilities of students and 42 students think that it is to create the atmosphere of learning English. Only 1 student thinks that it is to learn from abroad and 2 think that teaching in English is a school rule. That is to say, 97% of the students have a positive understanding of the purpose of teaching in English that is to help students themselves improve their abilities and realize meaningful teaching beyond superficial.

As Wang (2008) put it, teaching purpose plays a navigation effect on teaching practice with the function of regulating teaching activities, evaluating teaching levels and motivating teaching responsibilities. Although students have a certain recognition of the positivity of teaching in English, nowadays many teachers do not have a clear understanding of the purposes of professional bilingual education, in particular, they do not figure out the basic target of professional bilingual education is whether to improve the students' language level or enrich their knowledge(Wang, 2008). And as for students, they are also uncertain about their learning target as to whether language level or the professional knowledge or even double demands of both language level and professional knowledge. The deviation of teacher's understanding of teaching purpose may lead to the confusion in choosing textbooks, implementing teaching modes and evaluation methods (Wang, 2008) which ultimately result in a poor teaching quality. Students and teachers are both aware that only English-medium teaching is to create the learning atmosphere and improve their abilities. But how to grasp each course's teaching purpose whether is professional knowledge or practical application is mainly due to teachers' teaching purpose. Only if the teaching purpose is clear and definite, students could concentrate on crucial points and learn efficiently.

Table 5.2 The purpose of teaching in English

	Student number
To improve the comprehensive English abilities of students	56
To create the atmosphere of learning English	42
To learn from abroad and keep pace with abroad	1
Teachers' task to follow school rules	2

### 5.2 Course Design

The complexity of courses directly influences the attitudes of students toward teaching in English. As seen in Table 5.3, in choosing the suitable course for teaching in English, 79 students choose Practical courses like "Spoken English" and only one student chooses Difficult courses like "Advanced English". Students are apt to be taught in English in some less difficult courses and particularly in practical courses to do interactions.

The complexity of courses affects the validity of courses teaching in English (Zhu, 2005). Table 5.4 shows that in practical courses like "Spoken English" there are 55 students who can reach 75%-100% understanding of the courses teaching in English. However, the number of students that can understand 75%-100% contents in difficult courses like "Advanced English" is 22 and the number in foundation courses like "English Writing" and "English Listening" is 38. It can be counted from the numbers that students who can understand 75%-100% contents of difficult courses only account for 21.8%, which means that students feel difficult in this kind of course and do not master well the contents of the course. Students could not understand all in difficult course taught in English while in other less difficult course they feel much easier to get information. Some students reflect that English language and professional knowledge they have learned are both superficial in courses taught only in English, which is the same as Zhu's (2005) survey results. Take a course "History and Anthology of English Literature" set up for English major students in China Three Gorges

University as an example, most students could not understand genres explained in English by teacher. There exist many doubtful points just in one course and they would not all consult teachers. When the doubtful points accumulate, a big problem in professional language will be close at hand. And in some practical courses, like “Spoken English”, they are almost satisfied with only English-medium teaching and think that English is necessary because they can easily get the information and they need to be offered opportunities to practice speaking and communication, concluded from open question and interviews. The modes of only English-medium teaching not fitting for all courses are appropriate for practical courses instead of difficult courses.

Different courses need different teaching standards and teaching targets as well (Liu, 2004). The courses with more professional knowledge aim at enriching students’ professional culture knowledge and the practical courses target in students’ capability training. Take the course “History and Anthology of English Literature” as an example again, the main purpose of this course is to enrich students’ literature knowledge. During teaching process, the main job of teacher is to pass on literature knowledge not on language ability. English language itself will add difficulties to students’ understanding of professional points. In the course of “Spoken English” whose purpose is to train students’ speaking ability English is necessary to create the English language atmosphere. The appropriate teaching purpose of each course is of crucial importance for its efficiency. Only with effective teaching modes various courses could achieve the basic teaching target.

Table 5.3 The most suitable course for teaching in English

	Student number
Difficult courses like “Advanced English”	1
Practical courses like “Spoken English”	79
Foundation courses like “English Writing” and “English Listening”	8
No requirement	13

Table 5.4 Degree of understanding the contents in course teaching in English

	0%-25%	25%-50%	50%-75%	75%-100%
Difficult courses like “Advanced English”	4	15	60	22
Practical courses like “Spoken English”	0	7	34	60
Foundation courses like “English Writing” and “English Listening”	0	8	55	38

### 5.3 Teachers’ Qualification

The precondition of using English as teachers’ high-level English proficiency which the improvement of students’ English levels cannot be ensured (Gu and Dong, 2005). As seen in Table 5.5, each level of teachers adopts the mode of teaching in English once in college so far. Some unqualified teachers of English adopt this kind of teaching modes that could not achieve good effect (Sun and Gai, 2005) or even worse get students confused in process of teaching.

Students prefer the teachers who have had a period of life experience in foreign countries to teach in English. As seen in Table 5.6, there are more than half of the respondents choose the first two options which clearly shows that the teachers qualified to teach in English are only those who have had life experiences abroad. And some students indicate that the accent of teachers would influence the teaching quality and students’ listening, as stated by Chen (2010).

Teaching methods are closely related to the teaching levels a teacher could achieve (Chen, 2010). In the 50 effective open questions, 13 students express their hope for teachers to involve students in class and increase practical activities to realize students’ good English expression and communication. And 14 students show their expectation for their improvement of English expression ability in another way. As a result, any kind of teaching modes adopted by teachers including teaching in English or in bilingual language will have significant influence on teaching quality. If activities or interactions are organized in the teaching process, students’ active cooperation is necessary for the advancement of teaching effect (Li, 2013). It is very necessary for teachers to be trained not only in language proficiency but also in teaching methodology at large and modern teaching facilities (Zhu, 2003). While the precondition of students’ cooperation is that there are activities being organized and guided by teachers. Therefore, the ability to organize activities and activate students to participate is one necessary condition for a qualified teacher to realize good teaching effects (Li, 2013).

As discussed in section 5.1, it is responsible for teachers to grasp the teaching purposes during the teaching process. Most teachers are not yet figure out each course’s teaching purpose is whether to advance students’ language levels or to rich students’ professional knowledge (Wang, 2011). Teaching purposes, as the concentrated reflection of social needs, could regulate teaching activities and evaluate students’ levels and motivate teachers’ teaching responsibility (Wang, 2011). To be specific, clear and definite teaching purpose is very important for teachers to grasp the teaching main line and for students to focus on crucial points and it is an important element for a qualified teaching effect.

Teachers should weigh the importance of English language and professional knowledge of each course (Chen, 2010) in teaching process. The ability to grasp each course's teaching purpose is also one the condition of a qualified English teaching teacher.

Table 5.5 Teacher teaching in English

	Student number
Professor	16
Vice professor	2
Lecturer	6
All above	77

Table 5.6 The most qualified teacher for teaching in English

	Student number
Foreign teacher	23
Teacher who has been learned abroad	29
Teacher who has not been abroad	0
No requirement	49

#### 5.4 Students' Language Level

English level of students does not affect their attitudes toward teaching in English (Liu, 2004). Seen from Table 5.7 and Table 5.8, in the 27 students who support teaching in English, 51.9% of the students can reach 50%-100% understanding of the contents of difficult courses like "Advanced English", and 0%, 25.9%, 22.2% of the students can reach respectively 0%-25%, 25%-50% and 75%-100%. In the other 74 students who support teaching mainly in English but with Chinese to explain difficulties, there are 62.2% students who can reach 50%-100% understanding of the contents of the difficult courses, and 5.4%, 10.8%, 21.6% of the students can reach respectively 0%-25%, 25%-50% and 75%-100%. As a result, the proportions of the students in the two parts are of little difference that the degree of understanding below 50% accounts for 25.9% and 16.2% respectively, and the degree of understanding above 75% accounts for 22.2% and 21.6% respectively. The difficult course can distinguish the English levels of students, and the students in the two parts are not in different levels so the English level of students does not influence the attitude of students toward the teaching modes, as Liu's (2014) investigation.

The different English level of students is an important problem in participating the course teaching in English (Liu, 2004; Yang, 2011). Students' language level which is not competent to learn in only English-medium courses is also a huge problem (Chen, 2010). Teaching in English is a big challenge to those who are weak in listening that they may get little finally in classes and to those with a poor vocabulary that they may not figure out accurate information and it is impossible for them to put up their hands to ask in Chinese traditional classroom, according to interviews. Therefore, to improve the quality of teaching in English also needs students themselves to train listening and increase their vocabulary and so on in their spare time.

Table 5.7 Degree of understanding the contents in course teaching in English

	0%-25%	25%-50%	50%-75%	75%-100%
Difficult courses like "Advanced English"	0	7	14	6
Practical courses like "Spoken English"	0	0	8	19
Foundation courses like "English Writing" and "English Listening"	0	3	13	11

Table 5.8 Degree of understanding the contents in course teaching in English

	0%-25%	25%-50%	50%-75%	75%-100%
Difficult courses like "Advanced English"	4	8	46	16
Practical courses like "Spoken English"	0	7	26	42
Foundation courses like "English Writing" and "English Listening"	0	5	42	26



### 5.5 Teaching Effect

Comparing Table 5.9 and Table 5.10, we can see that only English-medium teaching does not appropriately improve the vocabulary, which is the biggest problem of students, but does good to the listening that students do not have many difficulties. On the contrary, students improve their listening ability on courses taught in English for a long time, thus they feel much easier in listening in courses conducted in English. Students being taught only in English adapt to the listening of English during classes, so the most obvious effect of only English-medium teaching is their improvement in listening ability. However, as for Chinese students whose comprehensive ability is of much higher level and productive ability is of lower level (Gao, 2001), the improvement in listening seems to be less important for them. The problem demanding prompt solution is how to improve their productive ability. Speaking ability, as one of the productive abilities, is possible to be trained in practical courses if English is the only permitted language during the class. In practical classes which aim at practicing students' language ability, the effect of only English-medium teaching could be extended to its maximum.

Students point out that some professional knowledge and professional vocabularies are more appropriate to be explained in Chinese. If being explained in English, they are still puzzled of them which is a waste of time and their enthusiasm in study. Only English-medium teaching is not an efficient mode in a course full of professional difficulties (Sun and Gai, 2005). Being taught only in English is not efficient for students to learn new professional words, because most students could not understand them and what's worse, they may misunderstand them. In such a case, Chinese is best to be added up to explain their meaning. If those words have once been explained clearly, the repetition of these of words in the process of teaching by teachers will stimulate students' brain to think and memorize. It is very efficient for their memorizing of language points.

Students hope to acquire good English atmosphere in classes which is a big problem faced by Chinese students. One of the main purposes of courses taught in English is to create good English atmosphere (Gao, 2011) but it seems that the students do not satisfy with it for they are requiring having a better learning condition. There are complaints that nowadays some teachers lecture only following the power point, and there are no interactions with the students, concluded from the open question and interviews. The voice of this kind of teacher is like a mosquito which could only bring them boredom, especially in some courses taught only in English. They can not figure out the emphasis and always feel difficult to keep pace with teachers' lecturing. They are eagerly asking for more interactions and group workings to get themselves involved into class. Interactions between teacher and students or group works between students are very important to activate students' learning interests. In those only English-medium teaching courses, students are easy to be absent from mind. The organization of activities is an efficient way to achieve high quality teaching effects (Wang, 2008). And the practical course which is most suitable for only English-medium teaching is needed with more activities to keep students' enthusiasm.

The purpose of students' learning is not only just improving listening ability or speaking ability. What they expect is to comprehensively improve their abilities including listening, vocabulary, expression and professional knowledge. In order to achieve students' expectations, various teaching modes and teaching methods have been studied out including only English-medium teaching. There is no fixed teaching mode which is suitable for all the courses and all the students. As only English-medium teaching can achieve better in practical courses, different kinds of courses need the teaching mode which is suitable to them. To achieve the high teaching efficiency in each kind course to each group of students is still a long journey for both students and teachers to walk (Liu, 2004).

Table 5.9 Difficulty in course teaching in English (multiple choice)

	Student number
Lack of vocabulary	88
Poor listening	48
Poor expression ability	58
Course's difficulty	36
Lack of professional knowledge	72

Table 5.10 Gain in course teaching in English (multiple choice)

	Student number
Improvement of listening	81
Increase of vocabulary	58
Improvement of expression ability	58
Improvement of translation ability	39
Enrichment of professional knowledge	55

On the understanding of the purpose of the courses taught only in English, students are clearly aware of the positivity of teaching in English but most students support teaching mainly in English but with Chinese to explain difficulties. Because of students' limited English proficiency, they could not always comprehend the contents taught in English. However, as said in interviews, if there are some Chinese added up to explain the difficulties, they would feel easier and more relaxed to get to the point in learning process and are willing to be active participator all along.

To sum up, the effect of only English-medium teaching is closely related to teachers' condition and students' participations, as well as nature of each course. Students prefer to be taught in English in practical courses to have more interactions to practice their communication and expression. And they prefer the teachers who have had a period of life experience in foreign countries to teach in English which is not affected by students' levels. The complexity of courses directly influences the attitudes of students toward teaching in English and the complexity of courses affects the validity of courses teaching in English. A teacher who plays an important role in each course is responsible to distinguish courses from different complexities and teaching purposes. A balance of language ability and professional knowledge is of great importance to achieve high teaching effects in all the courses conducted both in bilingual education and only in English. Only those practical courses aiming at improving language ability taught by qualified teachers are suitable for only English-medium teaching. As for professional knowledge, the mode of only English-medium teaching but with Chinese to explain difficulties is of much popularity among this group of senior students majoring in English.

## 6. Conclusion

There are limitations of the research because this survey is conducted in the group of senior English majors in China Three Gorges University, and the group can not represent all the national college students even all the national English majors. Nevertheless, the attitudes toward only English-medium teaching of this group of college students are worthy of reference. The results of this study can be concluded in two points. First, almost all of the students support bilingual education which represents that only English-medium teaching is not of popularity in this group of students. Although students are aware of the significance of only English-medium teaching, there are still some students who insist on bilingual education based on their own language level. Second, only English-medium teaching, which is of large advantages for providing learning atmosphere and so on, is called for to be adopted in practical courses aiming at improving language ability by qualified teachers instead of professional courses for the purpose of professional knowledge enrichment by unqualified teachers. How to teach is a long-term process which needs deep and continuous research to find out more efficient teaching ways. Owing to different groups of students and teachers and varied courses, a fixed teaching mode is not omnipotent to achieve high efficiency. As actions should be taken in the light of local conditions, students are needed to be educated in accordance with their aptitude, and the teaching modes should be adopted on grounds of each course's teaching purpose.

In terms of different courses, the practical courses are called for to be taught only in English and even required to add up more class activities to have students participate in English learning. Therefore, teachers should classify different kinds of classes and choose those which are suitable to teach only in English to conduct this teaching mode. As for those professional courses or difficult courses, Chinese can be added up to make explanations for the difficult language points. In different courses, teacher also should figure out its teaching purposes. If the course is suitable for language practicing, more activities should be added to practice students' language skills. If the course is full of professional knowledge, in order to achieve the goal of teaching professional knowledge, it is more effective to teach both in English and Chinese which is easy for students to understand. While if a course is a comprehensive one which is hard to distinguish the specific teaching purpose, the job of teachers is to evaluate the nature of the course and balance the teaching purpose (Chen, 2010) in the process of teaching. Each course is needed to be positioned correctly that it would realize its value of students' efficient learning.

College should emphasize on the selection and training of teachers especially those teachers who have potentials to teach only in English (Wang, 2011). A good teacher is the successful factor in one class to have the students get fully taught. In China, teachers are far from high standard of only English-medium teaching (Li, 2013), but we should put quality before quantity. Teachers are required to interact more with students. As for students, the most important is that students should be initiative in learning and participating during the cooperation with teachers (Li, 2013) to have better achievement in English classes.

Students' attitude is the first thing to take into consideration (Chen, 2010) when making up an education policy. This paper starts from students' attitudes to analyze the current immersion programme in college and gets the result that students are favor of bilingual education. Students put forward their own requirements toward course design and teachers' condition that college could think over of it and make up a better course plan and introduce high qualified teachers to conduct courses only English-medium teaching. Students themselves are also aware that most of themselves are not initiative to learn English so they call for teachers to add up more interactions during class, however, learning is not only in class but in everywhere of our life and society. Only students intend to study actively and positively can they achieve success in learning process. What teachers manage to do or what policies have been made is just outside force, only the students' intention and action to learn is the decisive factor for them to make achievements.

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## Appendix 1 Questionnaire for Present Study

### A Questionnaire on China Three Gorges University Students' Attitudes Toward Only English-Medium Teaching in Classrooms

#### (English Version)

Dear classmates,

Thank you very much for your participation in this questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed for a better understanding of your attitudes toward only English-medium teaching in classrooms. The results will be only used for academic study and will not open to the public. Please choose the one you prefer and fill in the bracket. Thanks for your cooperation.

1. Which of the following teaching mode do you prefer in English courses? ( )
  - A. Teaching only in English and using English to explain difficult problems
  - B. Teaching mainly in English but using Chinese to explain difficult problems
  - C. Teaching mainly in Chinese and seldom in English
  - D. Teaching only in Chinese

2. Which title of teachers teaches only in English in your English courses?
- A. Professor                      B. Vice professor  
C. Lecturer                      D. All above
3. Who do you think is the most qualified teacher to teach only in English? ( )
- A. Foreign teacher                      B. Teacher who has been learned abroad  
C. Teacher who has not been abroad      D. No requirement
4. What do you think is the purpose of only English-medium teaching courses that open in your college? ( )
- A. To improve the comprehensive English abilities of students  
B. To create the atmosphere of learning English  
C. To learn from abroad and keep pace with abroad  
D. Teachers' task to follow school rules
5. Which do you think is the most suitable course for teaching only in English? ( )
- A. Difficult courses like "Advanced English"  
B. Practical courses like "Spoken English"  
C. Foundation courses like "English Writing" and "English Listening"  
D. No requirement
6. How much can you understand in difficult courses like "Advanced English" when teacher teaches only in English? ( )
- A. 0%-25%                      B. 25%-50%  
C. 50%-75%                      D. 75%-100%
7. How much can you understand in practical courses like "Spoken English" when teacher teaches only in English? ( )
- A. 0%-25%                      B. 25%-50%  
C. 50%-75%                      D. 75%-100%
8. How much can you understand in foundation courses like "English Writing" and "English Listening" when teacher teaches only in English? ( )
- A. 0%-25%                      B. 25%-50%  
C. 50%-75%                      D. 75%-100%
9. What is your own problem in only English-medium teaching classes? (Multiple choice) ( )
- A. Lack of vocabulary  
B. Poor listening  
C. Poor expression ability  
D. Course's difficulty  
E. Lack of professional knowledge  
F. Others (Please fill in the blank)
10. What do you think can you gain from only English-medium teaching classes? (Multiple choice) ( )
- A. Improvement of listening  
B. Increase of vocabulary  
C. Improvement of expression ability  
D. Improvement of translation ability  
E. Enrichment of professional knowledge  
F. Others (Please fill in the blank)

Open questions:

What do you want to gain most in only English-medium teaching classes? What do you think are the drawbacks of only English-medium teaching? What are your suggestions on current English teaching mode?

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**Appendix 2 Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews (English Version)**

1. In English classes, do you prefer only English-medium teaching or bilingual teaching?
2. Why do you think the present college teachers teach only in English?
3. Who do you think are qualified for teaching only in English? Why?
4. What features of teachers would have good or bad influence on you in listening English classes? For example, pronunciation of teachers.
5. Which kind of course is easy for you to understand and participate in? Which is not?
6. Is the level of students related to the teaching effects of only English-medium teaching? How does it relate?
7. What problems have you encountered in only English-medium teaching classes?
8. What have you gained or what do you think can you gain from only English-medium teaching classes?