

TCSL and TESL in China *

DENG Shi-zhong

(Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, Chengdu, 610074 / Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan 610064, P. R. China)

Abstract: The recent drive of Chinese modernization and world Globalization has caused the rapid development of TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) and there are currently 300 million ESL (English as a Second Language) students in China. At the same time, due to similar forces and China's market economy reform, more and more foreigners are attracted to come to China to study Chinese. Purportedly, at present there are about 400 thousand overseas students learning Chinese in the mainland. TCSL (Teaching of Chinese as a Second Language) has turned into an increasingly popular major in modern China. Although TESL and TCSL have both flourished in China in the past two decades, there are tremendous differences between them. Beside the great disparity in the number of students enrolled in TESL and TCSL, there are also other differences, such as the proportion of teachers and students, publication of teaching materials, examination systems, pedagogical training, etc. By comparing the relative development of TESL and TCSL we can see there is vast room for expanding TCSL. We will explore these differences and possible action, which will further develop TCSL in China.

Key words: TCSL; TESL; demand of Chinese learning

1. Observe TCSL and TESL in China Base Some Data

The recent drive of Chinese modernization and world globalization has caused the rapid development of TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) and Chinese ESL students currently reach 300 million. At the same time, due to similar forces and China's market economy reform, more and more foreigners are attracted to come to China to study Chinese. Purportedly, at present there are about 400 000 overseas students learning Chinese on the mainland. TCSL (Teaching of Chinese as a Second Language) has turned into an increasingly popular major in modern China.

Although TESL and TCSL have both flourished in China in the past two decades, there are tremendous differences between them.

First, there is a large disparity in the number of students enrolled in TESL and TCSL. Chinese students of TESL reach 300 million in China, or one quarter of the Chinese population. This number includes 23 million students on university campuses, about 80 million junior and senior high school students, primary school students, and even the "bilingual" kindergarten students. On the other hand, there are only 90 thousand overseas students from 200 countries who are learning Chinese on the mainland each year.

* This work was supported by the Scientific Research Fund of Southwestern University of Finance and Economics (No.05Z23).

DENG Shi-zhong, PhD, professor of College of International Education, Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, master supervisor of TCSL at Sichuan University; research fields: teaching of Chinese as a second language & comparative literature.

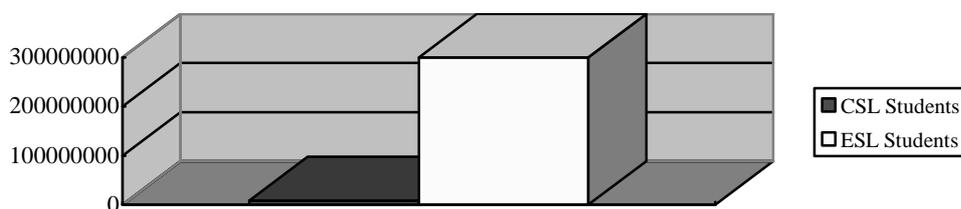


Chart 1 Comparable Data of CSL & ESL Students

Secondly, there are differences in the variety of examinations for TESL and TCSL. In addition to IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, TSE, APIEL, BEC, LSAT, CET, PETS and many other very famous authoritative English tests, there are also innumerable English examinations in China. But the HSK is the only authoritative Chinese examination for students studying Chinese abroad.

Thirdly, the number of examinees is different. Six million students attended the CET, about 120 thousand students took the TOEFL test, and 100 thousand students attended the IELTS in 2005, according to statistical data. The number of students attending the HSK, however is only about 60 thousand.

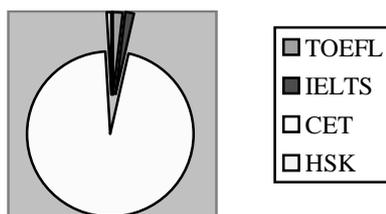


Chart 2 Examinees of CET, ELTS, TOEFL & HSK in 2005

Fourthly, there are more English teaching materials than Chinese teaching materials. There are many popular and well-known English teaching materials, such as *Follow Me*, *Step by Step*, *Listen to This*, *New Concept English*, and *Crazy English*, all of which have published again and again in the past 20 years. We have large and varied numbers of English teaching materials for university students, high school students, primary school students, children and office clerks. Almost all of the 500 Chinese publishing companies publish English teaching materials. Purportedly, English teaching materials are the fastest growing field in teaching materials market in China. For example, in 2003 the total sale of English teaching materials was over 2.4 billion RMB in China. British Finance Minister Gordon Brown (British Finance Minister) said, "Now educational export income is increasing the fastest in the U.K., and China is the leading impetus." There are only a few popular Chinese teaching materials for overseas students, such as *Modern Chinese Beginner's Course*, *New Practical Chinese Reader* and *Han Yu Jiao Cheng* (Chinese Tutorial), and only a few publishing companies publish them. Each year, 90 000 students purchased Chinese teaching materials for a total of 18 million RMB, or 0.75% of the total sales of English teaching materials.

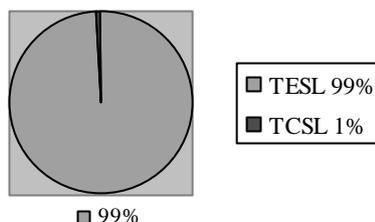


Chart 3 Comparison of Saleroom of TESL & TCSL Teaching Materials in 2003

Fifthly, the number of TESL and TCSL teachers varies greatly. There are over 800 000 English teachers in China including 500 000 high school teachers and 200 000 elementary school teachers. This number also includes more than 80 000 university teachers. At present, there are about 3 000 Chinese teachers who have obtained the Certificate for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Eligible full and part time Chinese teachers reach number only 6 000 for all of China, or 0.75% of the number of English teachers in China.

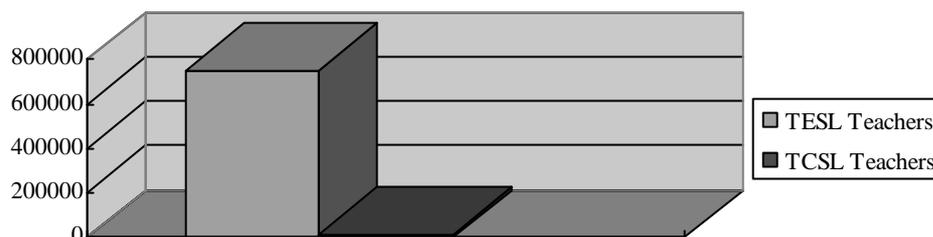


Chart 4 Numbers of TESL Teachers & TCSL Teachers at Present

Sixth, there is more training available for TESL than for TCSL. More than 80% of the 1 030 Chinese universities offer English as a major, and they recruit about 80 000 students each year, half of whom will become English teachers. There are only 60 universities, however, who offer TCSL as a major, and they recruit about 4000 undergraduate students and 300 graduate students each year. The total number of CSL students is about 5 000, just 6.25% of the number of English major students.

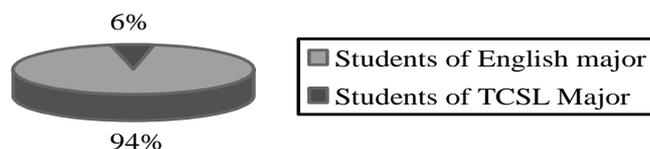


Chart 5 Contrast of Students of English Major & TCSL Major

2. Observe TCSL and TESL in China Base Intending Requirement

2.1 Internal requirement

According to the developmental trend of TESL, some experts predict that the number of Chinese students learning English will exceed the population of native English speakers in the next several years.^[2] It sounds like a very big number, but it is reported that there are 3.8 billion native English speakers in the world.^[3] In China alone, the number of English students is expected to increase by 80 million over the next 10 years. The rate of increase is 6.09% per year, much lower than the rate of increase of Chinese study. The number of foreigners learning Chinese is doubles approximately every three years. In 2010, there will be about 240 000 overseas students in China with the rate of increase reaching 27.8% per year.

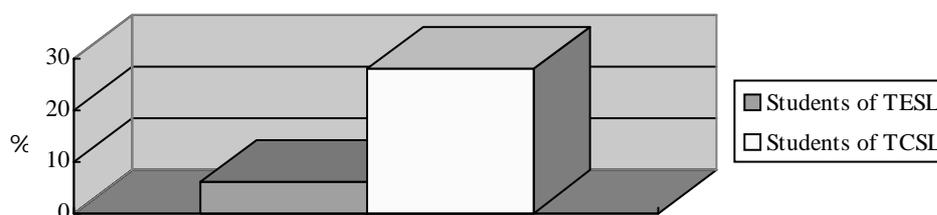


Chart 6 Increase Trend Rate of Students of TESL & TCSL in 2006~2010(%)

2.2 Overseas requirement

We will find an even larger demand for TCSL teachers if we regard the overseas market. According to statistical data, over 2 000 universities in nearly 100 countries presently have Chinese courses. In addition, about 24 000 American students study Chinese and more than 2 500 American high schools and elementary schools plan to set up Chinese courses. Some American high schools will start an AP (Advanced Placement) plan for high school students who want to take college preparatory courses. According to statistics, there are 2 376 American high schools plan to start Chinese course in 2004. But the Italian course is 238, the Japanese is 173, Russian is 54^[4] It is said that there are up to 4 000 students will choose the Chinese AP course. Experts say that AP Chinese programs demonstrate the development of Chinese language education in America and that more and more Americans will be interested in learning Chinese in the future. In order to pursue a better Chinese language learning environment, Americans will seek to benefit from teachers with experience in Chinese language and culture as well as TCSL-certified teachers from the international market.

Along with the rapid development of Chinese teaching the shortage of Chinese teachers is day by day serious. About 1 000 to 5 000 Chinese teachers will be absent only in America in the near future.^[4] According to forecasts from Chinese ministry of education, in 2010 about 115 million people around the world will study Chinese, requiring over 7.6 million Chinese teachers, or 1 teacher per 15 students. Now there are only about 6 000 TCSL teachers, so the proportion rate of increase will be 500%.

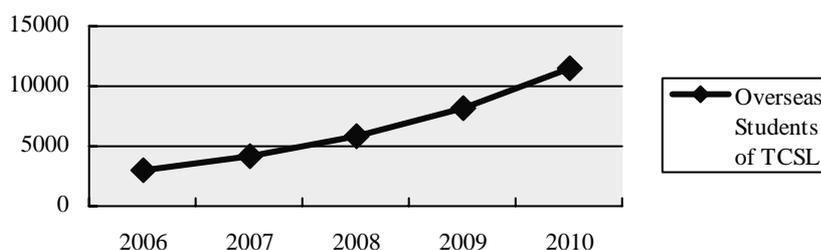


Chart 7 Increase Trend of Overseas Students in Future 5 Years (unit: 10thousand)

In 2004 100 000 overseas students took the HSK test. By 2010 that number will increase to 320 000.

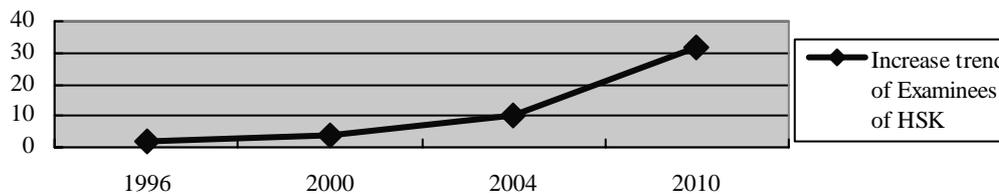


Chart 8 Examinees of HSK in 1996~2010 (unit: 10 thousand)

3. Conclusion

We can deduce the following conclusions from the discussion above:

Firstly, more attention has been paid to TESL than to TCSL in China in the past two decades. We know that the English education market is more mature than the Chinese education market, and in comparison to the management methods of TESL, there are many deficiencies in TCSL. This is demonstrated by the great disparity in the number of students enrolled in TESL and TCSL, the proportion of teachers and students, the publication of teaching materials, the examination systems, and pedagogical training, etc.

Secondly, due to the immaturity of the TCSL market, there is a huge room for further development of TCSL. Consequently, the increasing demand for TCSL will be swift and violent. Therefore, we must prepare to receive the enormous challenge at hand. In general, we should increase the number of TCSL teachers and improve the quality of their teaching. We should also compile and publish high quality teaching materials for TCSL, unify examination standards, and supply various kinds of exam systems.

Thirdly, a golden age of developing and “industrializing” of TCSL is coming into being around the world. We should seize the opportunity to utilize overseas markets and develop new possibilities for TCSL in order to satisfy the needs of overseas students learning Chinese.

We should take notice of that Chinese government have already taken a lot of measures to develop TCSL. But we expect greater effect and there are many jobs to do in future. We should say that we “shoulder heavy responsibilities”.

References:

- [1] Andrew Yvonn (2005). *Foreigners Look on Chinese* [online]. Available from <http://www.xinhuanet.com>. [Accessed on 8th May, 2005]. Quoted from *Financial Times*. 2005-04-13.
- [2] ZHANG Jie. (2006). *Linguistics Field: “All the People Study English” Can Cause the Level of Mother Tongue Education Drop* [online]. Available from: <http://www.china.org.cn>. [Accessed on 16th May, 2006].
- [3] HUANG Qi. (2003). *Research of Entire Language English Teaching Strategy to the Intelligent Barrier Students’ English Study Result*. In: Doctor Degree Thesis of Special Education Department, Taiwan Zhonghua Normal University.
- [4] The Office of Chinese Language Council International. (2006). *American University Council Holds the Symposium on the Entire American Chinese Teachers and the Certificate of Chinese Teachers*. Available from: <http://www.hanban.edu.cn>. [Accessed on 5th June, 2006].

(Edited by LIU Ren-feng and ZHOU Qun-ying)