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## **Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in Taiwan: A Socio-cultural Analysis**

**Fan-Wei Kung**

National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

<fwkung@ntnu.edu.tw>

### **Abstract**

This article examines the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in Taiwan based on Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural framework. The historical context is provided after some delineations of the educational system in Taiwan with regard to its foreign language instruction policy and development. Based upon the proposed socio-cultural framework, this study explores whether culture is an important variable, and what measures have been taken by both learners and practitioners to resolve the problems of EFL teaching and learning in Taiwan. The findings demonstrate that Chinese culture is indeed one of the most paramount determiners pertaining to foreign language teaching and learning in classroom settings in that it exerts a substantial impact on both the teachers and learners in various aspects in Taiwan. Several difficulties of teaching and learning EFL are also highlighted along with the ways in which learners and practitioners have aimed to alleviate them collectively. This article offers essential issues to teachers not only as a means to enhance the knowledge of their students, but also as an avenue to guide researchers for future academic endeavors. It is anticipated that more insight into learners' language development and teachers' implementation can thus be gained.

**Keywords:** socio-cultural theory, activity theory, culture, EFL, SLA, ZPD

### **Introduction**

This article delineates some issues in relation to culture faced by the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Taiwan. Cultural variables in a specific learning context are essential for language teaching and learning since they conceptualize how teachers and learners perceive and instruct in many classroom settings (Valdes, 1986). An examination of the literature reveals that little research has hitherto investigated the socio-cultural perspective in Taiwan pertaining to the teaching and learning of English along with their ramifications in the wake of some educational reforms for EFL learners.

The paucity of research within Taiwan on some educational phenomena embedded in Chinese culture has led to the undertaking of this inquiry. In order to bridge this gap, Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural framework is conceptualized in this article to ascertain whether any cultural variable exists that could exert a substantial effect on the learning of EFL in Taiwan. A brief historical background of the educational and political systems will be discussed first to provide readers with more contextual knowledge in terms of EFL learning, followed by some occurrences in Taiwan that are found to be deeply ingrained in Chinese culture. The article further provides several ramifications from empirical studies regarding how learners and practitioners have started to work collaboratively to refine the EFL learning based upon Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory in Taiwan. The findings have implications for the learning of EFL in which more insight into learners' language acquisition can be gained to inform practice in other similar contexts.

### ***Taiwan's historical background and learning settings***

Taiwan, also called as the Republic of China (R.O.C.), refers to the main island of the country including Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. It used to be a colony of Japan and thus, the Japanese language was the official language on the island half a century ago. Though Japanese is not currently one of the official languages, it can be heard quite often from people who are in their sixties due to Japan's colonization. During this era, the Taiwanese language was officially banned in schools and government settings. Taiwanese is also called Min-nan or Tai-yu that includes all the indigenous languages such as Hakfa and Holoee, while Mandarin Chinese refers to the official language used and spoken by the immigrants from China to Taiwan in the 1940s (Chiung, 2001).

In terms of the English language, it is officially categorized as a foreign language taught and learned in school. Nevertheless, English is different from other foreign languages in that it enjoys a status of prestige (Su, 2008). It has not only been taught as a mandatory subject, along with Mandarin, from elementary to graduate school, but has also been used as a criterion for school admission purposes and job applications. As the trend of globalization spreads to Taiwan for admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO), English has further been solidified as an essential language for educational and international purposes. One example could be seen in which English was suggested to be included as one of the official languages in Taiwan by the Parliament in 2002 to strengthen the national status globally (Liu, 2005). In the next year, Taiwan's Ministry of Education went so far as to look for native English-speaking teachers in elementary and junior high schools for the purpose of facilitating the English learning with an aim to improve students' communicative language competence (Shin & Lee, 1996).

In order to internationalize Taiwan in the Asia-Pacific region, the government also proposed several avenues to make the island more "English friendly" in the following years. Bilingual signs (Chinese to English) were set up in public settings such as schools, government buildings and streets to welcome more foreigners. Nowadays, practically everything seen on the street includes Chinese and English translations with more and more people who only speak English (Su, 2008). English is even considered the only language for career promotion and tenure, which explains the reason for which English learning in Taiwan has been a trend for the past decade with no end in sight.

Given the fact that learning English has become a common practice pertaining to its international significance, parents in Taiwan have started sending their children to bilingual schools in early childhood to ensure their children's English proficiency. The number of bilingual kindergartens surged tremendously over a decade ago, and native English speakers have been in demand for employment ever since (Liu, 2005). For parents, this practice contributes to the popularity of sending their children to several private language institutions for the purpose of preparing them for passing the English language examinations. Under these circumstances, passing the examinations seems to be the top priority of learning English with the help of those language institutions for students starting from pre-school.

The popularity of learning English also initiated several educational policy changes in Taiwan. However, most of them are viewed less than desirable in that they sometimes lack a thorough discussion and consideration before implementation (Law, 2002). Many educational reforms fail to meet the needs of EFL students in Taiwan's constantly changing society. Some complaints such as the overly competitive learning environment, incorporation of the Listening Comprehension Test for junior high school students for the Senior High School Entrance Exam, and the Graduation Benchmark for university students are argued by some scholars to adversely influence students' EFL learning (Chen, 2008; Mok, 2000). The learning laden with test-driven drills for passing various examinations indeed entails several Chinese cultural elements in the EFL education in Taiwan. The following section is dedicated to discussing this phenomenon critically after the introduction of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory.

### ***Theoretical foundation: Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory***

The tenet of socio-cultural theory is to understand how people perceive and interact with each other on a daily basis. According to Vygotsky (1978), the study of socio-cultural theory includes various forms of mental activity, attention and memory process in the domain of cognition. Based on this construct, the tenet of socio-cultural theory is established in a mediated relationship from humans' mental activity that subsequently affects their behavior (Duff, 2007).

For language learning, Vygotsky (1978) conceptualizes the framework of *activity theory* as part of his socio-cultural theory to embody how minds are functioned for learning to occur. Learners' motives are further suggested to play a significant role in the process of learning to reach their goals. According to this socio-cultural perspective, learning a new language implies that the mastery of that specific language is jointly constructed from students' dialectic collaboration for meaning to be mediated (Lantolf, 2000). Learners' cognition and learning devices are thus situated and embodied through their discursive and interactive activities that promote language learning (Lantolf, 1994). Over the past decade, research on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory has proliferated in second language learning. One essential aspect of this theory is that learners appropriate their means to gain control through cooperation before they learn how to function independently as Lantolf (2000) has clearly illustrated for effective language acquisition.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), much attention has been paid to the socio-cultural theory that considers learning a socially constructed trajectory through human cognition for social interactions to take shape (Vygotsky, 1978). The *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) conceptualized by Vygotsky (1978) has been the subject of research interest since it underscores how learning is formed through learning from the more experienced peers (teacher-learner or learner- learner) for more scaffolded collaborations. In this respect, ZPD could be an interpretive tool that assists us in understanding the dynamics of language learning contexts that have various cultural variables (Ohta, 1995). This framework illustrates that the learning and psycholinguistic processes are not separate from their social contexts; that is, they are reciprocally constitutive (Lantolf, 1994). Researchers in the field have started to utilize ZPD to conceptualize language teaching and learning in that the formation of language acquisition and socialization cannot take shape without the guidance from a more experienced peer in any learning environment (Hall, 1995).

### ***The study***

Previous research has revealed that more interactions between peers in classroom settings induce more ZPD that could, in turn, facilitate language learning and classroom dynamics. However, few academic attempts have tried to analyze the EFL context in Taiwan through such a socio-cultural framework based on the consideration of Chinese culture. In order to bridge this gap, the objectives of this study are to investigate whether culture is an important variable in the EFL context in Taiwan based upon the conceptualization of ZPD, and what measures have been taken by both learners and practitioners to resolve the problems of EFL teaching and learning there.

### ***Learning EFL based on Chinese culture***

Students in Taiwan are deeply influenced by Chinese culture in terms of their learning style and attitude. Cortazzi and Jin (1996, p.74) used the framework based on Chinese culture to conceptualize Chinese-speaking learners' affect that typifies Chinese society. Since then, language teachers and researchers have placed a great emphasis upon the role of culture in language classrooms because learners' affective factors are essential for their language development (Cohen & Dornyei, 2002; Joseph, 2004). Pinker (2009) and Yang (1992) define language development as the comprehensive grip on the four language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) for language learners to communicate with each other effectively in the target language.

Some characteristics of Chinese culture include the overriding authority of teachers in the classroom and students' great respect to them for their comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Cheng, 2000; Diab, 2000). Owing to Chinese modesty and face-saving philosophy, many Chinese students do not deem asking questions in public a good deed in that the teacher-student transmission of knowledge should be greatly respected and valued. According to Confucian beliefs and philosophy, good teachers should provide students with guidance without exerting excessive pressure that might result in unnecessary outcomes, and they should also teach them how to be reflective learners at the same time (Hu, 2002). Teachers are also expected to be role models for students to emulate based on their virtues both inside and outside

the classroom (Cheng, 2000). To cultivate students' learning development, teachers are advised to not merely impart knowledge, but to foster their moral standards to equip learners with a developed social conscience. The conceptualization of being a role model characterizes Chinese culture and it reflects how Chinese students learn in various ways when learning English. Based on this paradigm, teachers are expected to be knowledgeable, considerate and lenient toward their students. As far as learners are concerned, they would treat teachers with respect and expect them to show great interest in what they are teaching because they are considered the most reliable people in any classroom setting (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). This practice can thus be conceptualized as Vygotsky's ZPD because learners are expected to learn from the more experienced peers (teachers in Chinese culture). However, as learners in this context are often found to be reticent pertaining to classroom engagement as the literature reveals (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013), more effort needs to be made to initiate more teacher-student and student-student interactions and collaborations for ZPD to form in a more comprehensive manner for the purpose of facilitating the process of teaching and learning.

The Chinese philosophy of modesty also exerts a substantial effect on many classroom settings as students are acutely aware of group harmony as opposed to personal achievement academically (Bush & Haiyan, 2000). Students generally value more mutual collaborations to avoid showing off individual success. For instance, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) and Saville-Troike (1988) suggest that Chinese learners feel more comfortable speaking English in small groups as opposed to in public for the sake of protection and modesty that they possess when they do not need to speak in front of the whole class. For fear of making mistakes, students also prefer to speak privately so as not to be mocked by their peers. Students are found to think carefully before they speak English in class to avoid making errors, which indicates that Chinese students are more concerned about accuracy compared to fluency. In Chinese culture, being active in class does not always signify success since students are expected to share credit evenly (Wen & Clement, 2003; Zhou & Kim, 2006). The idea of losing face in public when a mistake is made contributes to students' passive learning attitude when learning a second or foreign language, which reveals their collective-oriented learning trait in the classroom (Chen, 2002; Wang, 2003; Yen, 2002). Many Chinese EFL learners have thus become consciously or unconsciously anxious to speak or write in the target language for fear of losing face to avoid embarrassment.

A lack of confidence can also be observed when learners need to speak in front of their peers publicly. For example, Price (1991) conducted an investigation in which Chinese EFL learners were reported to experience their feelings by using some terms such as *horrible*, *frightened*, and *awful* to express their fear of speaking English in front of a large number of people. In this study, though some students were found to be indifferent unlike the majority of the participants, several cultural elements were revealed to determine their fear to speak up in class to avoid possible confrontation. Wen and Clement (2003) discovered that Chinese English as a Second Language (ESL) learners are often regarded as reticent or lack the willingness to communicate in the target language compared with western learners due to the effect of their culture. For example, Chinese learners may prefer to complete a task collectively while western learners

might be more inclined to emphasize personal attainment of greatness when engaged in learning. This phenomenon corresponds to Vygotsky's ZPD due to the nature of collectivism in which peers work together to make learning happen. That is, through various classroom interactions with one another, students can learn collaboratively and foster their social skills when learning an L2.

The other socio-cultural phenomenon upon which Chinese culture is based is the purpose of learning (Zhou & Kim, 2006). The concept of learning has several historical and educational implications for Chinese students. At the cultural level, learning English has been viewed as a means to elevate the social status and economic mobility and ultimately more financial and material success (Cheng, 1996). At the educational and national level, learning English has been regarded as an avenue to facilitate national modernization and prosperity, especially after the 19th century (Ross, 1993). This implies that Chinese learners have the willingness to increase their learning effort for the purpose of achieving academic greatness. In the case of EFL learning, they make great efforts when taking several international standardized examinations such as the GRE, GMAT and TOEFL to study in North America. Passing these tests affords students more opportunities to pursue their personal aspirations in the future. For many Chinese students, doing well on these exams also assists them in entering the higher social realm with an invaluable asset in the workforce. For example, Gao (2006) conducted a study investigating Chinese learners' language learning strategy after moving to the UK using a socio-cultural framework. The study shows that Chinese learners indeed possess some degree of similarity as their language learning methods are still test-oriented and analytical. Moving to the UK seems to make them adopt more practical strategies based on their needs to cultivate better communicative skills. Such findings are concluded with the recommendation that language teachers should be acutely aware of Chinese learners' needs from their cultural roots in order to make more informed decisions for more effective teaching and learning. Xiao's (2006) study also suggests that Chinese students possess unique cultural aspirations when learning a foreign language compared to their Irish peers, and language teachers are ultimately called to utilize bridging strategies to give Chinese students more room for improvement and growth with a sense of cultural understanding and sensitivity.

It is clear that Chinese culture imposes a substantial impact on teaching and learning in various ways for language learners. As research has suggested that language teaching cannot be separated from culture (Zhou & Kim, 2006), it is essential for language teachers to be cognizant of the fact that in order to attain the desired learning outcome, they are advised to demonstrate a sense of cultural understanding that promotes a more positive atmosphere. From the analysis above, it is clear that Chinese collectivism has a lot to do with Vygotsky's ZPD as far as EFL learning is concerned. As Chinese culture has deeply influenced Taiwanese students' learning in many aspects (Ho, 1998; Hwang, 2005), the following section is dedicated to delineating the EFL learning context in Taiwan more specifically with some issues found in its educational system. The foci of the following section will be on whether Taiwan's EFL learning supports or contradicts Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory.

### ***Learning EFL in Taiwan: Educational system and issues***

Taiwanese students have been influenced by the traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism (Ho, 1998). Some effects derived from Confucianism on Taiwanese EFL learners include: students' passive learning mode, focus on test preparation, face-saving philosophy, and reticence. As Confucianism stresses the role of teachers, their overriding authority in class explains why they deserve students' respect (Hsu, 2013; Hwang, 2005; Liao, 2006). This phenomenon deeply influences the way in which L2 listening and speaking are taught in Taiwan's educational system over the past decade since traditional learning focused more on the teaching of L2 reading and writing. This traditional learning mode has resulted in several potential problems because it is different from what research has indicated that L2 immersion is found to give students more opportunities to acquire the authentic language through inductive learning (Hoberg, 2004; Horne, 2005). From this inductive construct, students learn to speak the target language through the errors they make and examples they hear from the authentic input. They can also discover the rules of the target language independently, making the learning process more automatic and effective (Evans, 2002).

However, other researchers maintain that successful L2 learning is solely based upon the explicit presentation of metalinguistic knowledge such as the provision of a set of abstractions, isolated language rules, and prescriptive grammar drills from teacher to students (Johnson, 1994; Klaassen, 2002; Lin, 1996). Based on their theory, this makes the entire learning process more effective and time-saving, which leads to more time for learners to digest what they have learned for further discussion and comprehension. Yet, the nature of such a learning approach within the traditions of Chinese culture and Confucianism soon results in the practice of memorization among the EFL learners in Taiwan. Students are often found to memorize grammatical rules and the spelling of vocabulary without genuinely understanding the language itself. As for the teachers in Taiwan, they have also started teaching English for the purpose of passing various international standardized English tests such as the TOEFL, TOEIC and IELTS (Yu, 2008). This Chinese collectivism between teacher and students to ace these examinations does not seem to strengthen learners' communicative competence based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory when the focus is primarily on test preparation. This learning strategy has been found to be rather monotonous and mechanical for learners in that the goal of learning is no longer for practical communication. Teaching to the test has also changed the EFL education completely, which negatively influences the genuine classroom dynamics in Taiwan (Tsao, 1999). This further shows that the deep-rooted Confucianism might have a few adverse ramifications for L2 learning as illustrated.

After several decades, students in Taiwan have thus become known for their test-taking skills based on their results on the TOEFL and IELTS in the Asia-Pacific region (Hwang, 2005). However, many studies have revealed that students' high scores on the tests do not signify their overall English proficiency after they study abroad (Hoberg, 2004; Horne, 2005). Students are also found to equate English learning with test preparation and grammatical analysis. Based on this phenomenon, many students refuse to learn anything that is different from what is found on the test, making English learning purely test-driven (Hwang, 2005). For example, students in Taiwan were known for their high

scores on the first version of the TOEFL-PBT (paper-based test) when it was first introduced in Taiwan more than a decade ago. At that time, the focus of the test was mainly on grammatical analysis and reading comprehension. From the test-oriented approach of learning English, students in Taiwan did not find it difficult to ace the test, but performed well through memorization and structural analysis. This not merely leads to their passive learning style, but also solidifies their inherent belief that English learning is for the purpose of test preparation (Lin, 1996).

Nonetheless, an important transformation occurred when the Educational Testing Service (ETS) decided to introduce a new edition of the TOEFL and TOEIC in 2006 with more emphasis on listening and speaking assessments. Seeing the needs of several educational institutions and international settings where English is used as a means of communication rather than grammatical analysis, the ETS decided to replace the original grammatical and structural analyses with more integrated listening and speaking tasks to assess students' communicative skills (Evans, 2002). Because of this change, students in Taiwan panicked when the latest version of the TOEFL iBT (internet-based test) was launched because they were not prepared based on the existing English learning context in which listening and speaking skills were not the focus. The past test-taking strategy no longer worked for them since they would have to listen to several academic lectures and be required to make an oral summary. After the introduction of the TOEFL iBT, reports of the test results have reflected Taiwanese students' poor English performance, which is different from the previous test edition focusing on grammatical and structural analyses. As Hsu (2013) indicates, according to the 2010 Educational Testing Service report on Asian EFL university students' performance from 2007 to 2009 on the TOEFL iBT, students in Taiwan ranked 18th among 30 Asian countries, behind those from South Korea and China. The British Council's 2006 report on performance rankings of the IELTS placed Taiwanese students at 17th among 20 Asian EFL countries. In 2010, the Cambridge ESOL Centre reported that Taiwanese students' IELTS performance lagged behind that of the test takers from Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Korea, and was only marginally ahead of those from China.

As for the socio-cultural reasons for which students in Taiwan did not perform well internationally on these tests, it is important to note that they are used to learning English through memorization and grammar translation from the test-driven teaching methodology that is deeply rooted in Confucianism (Liao, 2007). As a result, the focus of teaching is directed toward successful completion of the test, which renders a more monotonous learning mode that does not cultivate effective SLA. After the introduction of the revised TOEFL iBT, students in Taiwan have realized the importance of learning EFL not only to pass the test, but to acquire the communicative competence they need in today's globalized world. This signifies that the existing curriculum needs to be revised for effective gains in learners' comprehensive language proficiency (Chang, 2010).

From the above analyses, it can be concluded that the focus of English language teaching in Taiwan needs to be changed for more genuine communicative learning based on Chinese culture. As Huang and Chang (2004) have elucidated, communicative-based teaching provides students with more authentic communicative opportunities

compared to merely teaching the language form for the sake of acquiring the grammatical and structural rules. Teachers are advised to change their teaching approaches in EFL classrooms to provide students with more authentic and genuine language exposure (Hwang, 2005). Consequently, speaking English for daily communication would not seem to be that difficult for students in an EFL context in which English is not used for daily communication.

To provide students with more communicative-based instruction in the EFL classroom, an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) methodology in Taiwan's higher education has been launched with an aim to provide students with a more communicative environment to learn English (Chang, 2010; Yu, 2008). However, the campaign has also resulted in several issues for both teachers and students. That is, many content area teachers (such as business administration or chemistry) are required to teach only in English, which has brought about a great sense of pressure for many academics (Chang, 2010; Liao, 2007). The implementation of EMI without any consideration of students' needs has also undermined their learning outcome in various ways. One of the issues raised by Yu (2008) includes the difficulties experienced by many low-level EFL students at several technological universities in Taiwan in which EMI has been adopted as the only means of instruction to improve their listening and speaking competence. Students tend to perceive such a learning method differently from the government officials from their low English language competence. This phenomenon clearly contradicts Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory when EMI undermines teacher and students' interaction in the classroom when no preparation is in place for more qualified teachers to be trained to teach in an L2.

Secondly, a growing body of research has also appeared using more Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches both inside and outside the EFL classroom in Taiwan. For example, Hu, Ching and Chao (2012) conducted a study with regard to Taiwanese EFL learners' motivation with more CLT approaches in class, and the result indicates that students are more involved in tasks when communication is used as a means of instruction for more class collaborations. Their higher level of learning motivation also reveals that students value more practical aspects of EFL learning, not just for the purpose of passing tests such as the TOEFL and TOEIC. Huang and Chang (2004) conducted an inquiry with the university students in Taiwan, and the results show that the highly motivated EFL learners engage in their learning environment based on the available resources such as the self-access centers and extra-curricular activities after school in order to have more opportunities to communicate with their peers in English. The attendance of the Toastmasters Club is also found to be one of the ways in which students have adopted to foster their communicative skills by learning from the more experienced peers with similar interests to sharpen their spoken English and communicative competence (Sun, 2008). The popularity of such a learning approach can be seen as more than one hundred and twenty Toastmasters Clubs have been set up at the universities in Taiwan for students to practice their English speaking skills (Chao & Chen, 2011). This trend comes with an increased number of members every year.

This phenomenon also reflects how ZPD is conceptualized since students are expected to learn from their more experienced peers for knowledge to be gained and shared after

the educational reform for more CLT initiatives in Taiwan. From the efforts made by learners in Taiwan to improve their communicative competence such as the attendance of self-access centers and the Toastmasters Club, it is clear that students have taken various measures for more collaborations to occur to facilitate their EFL learning, allowing more ZPD to form as a result. Through students' mutual collaborations both in and out of class, their cognition could be stimulated through ZPD to facilitate their SLA that would not be possible if it was conceptualized singlehandedly.

### ***Conclusion***

To conclude, it is undeniable to find that culture is indeed an indispensable element that influences education in many ways, and the EFL education in Taiwan is no exception. This article demonstrates that Chinese culture indeed plays an essential role in the EFL teaching and learning in Taiwan. The Confucian philosophy also contributes to the teacher-fronted classroom settings where students are expected to value the teacher-student transmission of knowledge in the traditional Taiwanese classroom. The virtue of modesty in Chinese culture is further identified in this article as one of the reasons for which students in Taiwan tend to be reserved in terms of raising questions in class for fear of losing face to avoid embarrassment. This phenomenon is also found to influence students' affect that undermines their learning trajectory, which partially corresponds to the conceptualization of ZPD. Based on several Chinese cultural variables embedded in the EFL classroom, knowledge is transmitted through the more experienced peers in this teacher-student relationship for learning to occur. However, it is argued that such a model is not a complete representation of ZPD since little classroom interaction is present in the traditional Chinese classroom for any scaffolded collaboration, which subsequently influences how learners perceive their language acquisition (Ho, 1998). These cultural variables underscore the importance and practicality for language teachers to make several curricular changes in the future that could tailor to the needs of students based upon these inherent limitations.

With regard to the classroom settings in Taiwan, this article further delineates several issues in its educational system pertaining to the focus of EFL teaching and learning. Students are found to be demotivated from their unsatisfactory test results after the introduction of the new TOEFL and TOEIC after 2006 based on Chinese collectivism to learn an L2. This contradicts Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory when learning is predicated on test preparation. While some studies undertaken have utilized more communicative language approaches in the EFL classroom to improve students' communicative competence for more ZPD to form, it is still important for teachers to make more effort to provide learners with more communicative teaching with an awareness of some Chinese cultural variables that could potentially impact both EFL teaching and learning. More and more initiatives are also found to sharpen learners' communicative competence for ZPD to take shape such as the implementation of EMI and attendance of various activities in Taiwan. However, a lack of teacher preparation programs for both pre-service and in-service teachers to teach content classes in an L2 has resulted in students' difficulty to learn in the classroom. Academics are also found to experience great pressure when implementing EMI for internationalization. This does not seem to support Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory when teacher-student interaction

plays a key role in fostering more effective SLA. More studies are necessary as some challenges still exist and Taiwan is still undergoing a transition as to whether test-driven teaching is beneficial to the EFL learners when they still face great pressure to pass various standardized tests. It would thus be useful if research could be conducted to investigate this fundamental issue. It is foreseeable that more changes will be made in the next few years in Taiwan in the hopes of cultivating students' overall language proficiency that equips them with the necessary skills in the workforce in this globalized world.

To resolve the discussed issues derived from Chinese culture for Taiwan's EFL learning, some recommendations are provided. First, future teachers are advised to be acutely aware of students' learning trajectory based on different cultural variables. Knowing the limitation of Confucianism for Taiwan's EFL learners, EFL teachers should be more creative and open to curricular changes to foster students' L2 learning motivation by putting more emphasis on their communicative competence instead of test preparation when learning an L2. This will thus induce more ZPD to form when learning takes place between the teacher and students. Second, teacher preparation programs are advised to incorporate an EMI methodology into their curricula for more qualified teachers to be trained. In addition, more measures need to be taken to ensure that students are ready for EMI to be implemented more effectively. Perhaps more English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes need to be offered based on students' fields to equip them with a solid language foundation before EMI could be implemented more comprehensively. Third, both teachers and students should bear in mind the pros and cons of Chinese culture and Confucianism when learning an L2. In the context of Taiwan, policy makers and government officials are also suggested to pay more attention to the issues raised in education for refining the EFL curriculum more effectively.

While several social and learning phenomena have been demonstrated with regard to learners' affect as a result of Chinese culture in this study, more detailed analyses of their affective variables should be addressed using both qualitative and quantitative methods through ZPD to probe the EFL learning in Taiwan more holistically in the future. As the focus of this article is on whether Chinese culture is embedded in the EFL classroom in Taiwan from a macro perspective based on several existing occurrences, a detailed empirical investigation of learners' affect is beyond the scope of this study, which is also a limitation that needs to be acknowledged. Future research should address this issue for more insight into the teaching and learning of EFL in Taiwan or other similar contexts.

### **About the Author**

**Fan-Wei Kung** is an assistant professor of TESOL at National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan. He researches, publishes and presents internationally about bilingualism, multilingualism, world Englishes, language & cultural identities, applied linguistics and second language acquisition.

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