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ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION (ELE) AS A MARK OF SOCIAL DISTINCTION IN TAIWAN: BUXIBANS, ELE TEACHERS DISCOURSE, AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

YihFang Pan

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By

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M.A., Educational Leadership, Saginaw Valley State University, Michigan, 2004

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to apply the lens of social reproduction theory to explore how English language educators view English language education (ELE) and to understand how the English language is used to create social distinctions between Taiwanese English language educators and others in Taiwanese society.

Unlike other foreign languages, English enjoys a unique status and prestige in Taiwan because it is the preferred language for international communication. The belief in social mobility is the rationale for learning the English language. This study examines how the predominance of the English language creates internal conflicts and competition among groups. The role of ideology in language reveals how individuals make sense of the social order. From the outside, it seems that Taiwanese people benefit by learning English because it will lead to better jobs, but it is important to look within and among Taiwanese sub-groups and to acknowledge who truly has benefited from current English language policies.

The approach taken in this study was to use qualitative methods. The data included two individual interviews with 15 elementary English teachers, one focus group discussion,

journal writings, and analysis of ELE documents produced by the participants' schools and the Taiwanese Ministry of Education. The findings from this study reveal that English teachers rationalized the problematic educational policies toward students by perpetuating the value of dominant cultural capital and by blaming working-class parents' neglect of ELE. The study concludes that participants' conforming to English skills (four domains, i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening) is a form of cultural and linguistic capital that has become a key to social mobility and stratification in Taiwan.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

For this dissertation study, I investigated how English language education (ELE) creates social class inequality in Taiwan. During my investigation, I found research on the economic, cultural, and linguistic aspects of social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Bernstein, 1981; Lareau, 2000; Mehan, 1992; Willis, 1977). Thus, I explored how English language education (ELE) creates an ideology of social distinction and how this phenomenon perpetuates an unequal social structure among Taiwanese groups. Social reproduction theory (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1991) argues that schools are not institutions of equal opportunity but rather are forces that perpetuate social hierarchy. In Taiwanese society, as in the United States, public education is presented as a meritocracy system, promoting equal educational opportunity as the primary means of upward social mobility.

The meritocracy system actually reinforces achievement ideology and socializes Taiwanese people to believe that education creates equal opportunity for everyone. Education can be an instrument of hegemony when the culture and values from the dominant group are presented as education and regarded as national values (Chang, 2006; Fu, 2004). Social stratification is the process through which goods, including power, wealth, housing, and education are distributed among people based on their social class position. People must compete with each other to establish a position of higher social status. Education is an important tool in this process because education provides the capital through which one attains a higher social class. The more education we receive, the more knowledge we obtain, the better jobs we can potentially acquire, and the higher social status we maintain (Lin, 1999). The Taiwanese educational system is a credential system, and thus, students need to

be competitive in order to obtain better grades to subsequently gain admission to high schools and universities. Prior to the reform of the Taiwanese educational system in 1998, in order to enter high school, every student had to compete by taking the national entrance exam. This test was administered only once a year, and students who failed the exam either waited until the following year to retake the exam, or had the option of taking other exams to gain entry into a vocational school or a five-year junior college. If the student did not pass any of the exams, they had to retake them until successful completion. Because high school is considered the most direct educational track to enter a university, high school students also had to take more national entrance exams to be admitted into the university. Additionally, students in a vocational school or five-year junior college were required to take more tests to qualify to enter a university (MOE, 2006).

After the educational reform, the Taiwanese government eliminated national entrance examinations and combined three tracks: high school, vocational, and five-year junior college to open more channels for students to apply to the schools of their choice. Before 2014, students could enter a university by taking two basic competence tests in their junior year of high school or through a teacher recommendation and demonstrated academic excellence (MOE, 2005, 2006). The purpose of establishing more routes for entering secondary and higher education is to give students more opportunities to receive a higher education. Starting in August 2014, the MOE extends compulsory education from nine years to 12 years. The main purposes of 12-year compulsory schooling are to phase tuition-free education, admission without entrance exams, and a balanced development between high schools and vocational schools in all districts. It seems that the MOE is trying to close the gap of educational resources between rural and urban areas and make education equitable for

all students. However, this reform generates criticism because middle-school students still must take an exam, the Comprehensive Assessment Program, before they apply for the high school or vocational school they wish to enter. Under this new policy, English listening will be added into the comprehensive assessment program. By going through many types of educational system reforms, most students, based on their parents' traditional beliefs and expectations, still will opt for the high school route versus attending a vocational school (Chou, 2009). I addressed more of this new policy for 12-year compulsory education in the literature review.

English is one of the languages that students need to study to pass the entrance examinations to enter high school and the university. Though a student may pass most parts of the exam, the overall score is greatly affected by one's performance on the English language component of the exam. Therefore, students are encouraged to study the English language.

Tsai (2010) argues that the use of the English language is more popular because it is a response to the demands of the labor market. ELE is useful not only for Taiwanese people to communicate with others internationally, but it is also the number one focus of the nation's schools, more so than other subject areas. The ongoing discussion related to ELE in Taiwan centers on English pedagogies and student test scores (Chen, S., 2003; Chen, Zh., 2009; Chern, 2002; Chuang, 1998; Her, 2007; Huang, 2006). Reform of the Taiwanese? educational system was undertaken in 2000 to implement English language classes at the elementary school level, to adopt new communicative English teaching methods, to add English language proficiency tests prior to college graduation, and to build international programs to recruit foreign college students and professors.

The purpose of implementing the language policy was to help students build their English speaking skills. It seems that the policies (Ministry of Education, 2001, 2005, 2007a) implemented were intended to help Taiwanese people gain more English language skills so that they might become competitive worldwide. Parents enroll their children in after-school cram schools called, *buxibans*, to gain proficiency. In Taiwan, cram schools are called 補習班 (*buxiban*) and any type of extracurricular academic lesson could be learned in a *buxiban*, (e.g., mathematics, science, music, or foreign languages). Cram schools are specialized *buxibans* in specific subject areas designed to prepare students to meet particular goals. For example, one common use is to help prepare students to pass the entrance examination for high schools and universities. The English name is from the term “cramming,” defined as studying a large quantity of material in a short period of time. The staff in cram schools may have access to the previous year’s examinations, and they incorporate mastering of these exams by integrating them into public school lesson plans. For example, students will be asked to practice many exams. English and Japanese are common subjects taught in *buxibans*. Traditionally, Taiwanese parents send their children to more than one *buxiban* so that they can focus on different subject areas to gain an academic advantage.

Furthermore, teachers learn new methods and programs to better teach English speaking skills. English teachers are responsible for teaching the English language so that students might be more marketable when they search for job opportunities. For many Taiwanese people, the significance of being proficient in English is creating a status marker as the number of English language speakers grows. Not only do schools require that students take more English proficiency tests, but also many companies require that prospective candidates conduct their job interview in English. Tsai (2010) found that people in Taiwan

associate English language fluency, versus Mandarin fluency, with greater economic status. The result of Tsai's research makes me question if socially people categorize others into different groups based on their English language ability. I have witnessed teachers saying that whoever acquires English proficiency will have a better future. In this way, achievement is tied to how well students learn English, thus linking achievement and merit ideologically.

On the other hand, some teachers have different opinions about ELE. I received an intriguing email in 2008 about an English teacher's reflections on a blog. The blogger, who is an English teacher, posed the question, "What is the purpose for us to learn English?" She mentioned that people criticized the low scores Taiwanese students earned on English proficiency tests in Taiwan. Taiwanese people all know how important learning English is because as an island country, Taiwan needs English language competency to compete economically with other nations and to represent itself worldwide. However, the blogger recognized how the English language is associated with a "special" status and power in the town where she lived. Though the English language is a tool, for some Taiwanese people it is elevated to that of a powerful allure. She shared stories about Taiwanese people's attitudes toward English language learning from her neighbors who had a higher education background. This particular couple hired native English speakers to teach their children. Then they would send the children abroad to become more fluent in English. When the children returned to Taiwan, they complained about how awful the living conditions are in Taiwan as compared to Western countries. Other parents are proud of their children's native-like English, even proud that those children speak Mandarin with a "foreign accent." There are professors who speak "perfect" English and criticize students who speak English with a Taiwanese accent. Students who participate in bilingual programs in Taiwan speak English,

not Mandarin, in public. The situation made the blogger wonder if the reason we learn English is to make other Taiwanese people, who cannot understand English, envious of the perceived superior status of those who do speak English.

What this blogger said interested me because I also recognize how ELE is used to create different hierarchies between parents and kids, teachers and students, and between various communities within the Taiwanese society. For example, people like me, from the middle class, have more opportunities to live in the United States and to receive an American education while increasing our English language skills. Individuals from the middle or higher classes who have received and/or are receiving a higher education outside of Taiwan tend to have a higher social status. They typically measure social status through their mastery of their English speaking skills, comparing their perceived superior status to those who have not had similar opportunities.

Therefore, I wanted to explore the meaning of ELE for Taiwanese people in Taiwan, especially English language educators. Just before starting this study, I found an article posted on a news web regarding an English teacher's experience in both urban and rural areas (Lee, 2009). Lee comments that rural students, typically lower class, tend to give up on English language classes because they do not have access to many resources. However, students from the middle/ higher social class, in general, urban dwellers, have the opportunity to begin learning, at a younger age, the English language in buxibans. They are told that the English language will be important in secondary school tests. In buxibans where English language is taught, teachers are Taiwanese-Americans who can speak fluent American English or they are native English speakers. This situation creates a negative outcome: Students from the lower class are at a higher disadvantage in terms of test scores because

they do not have equal access to the buxibans. Moreover, under the meritocratic system, only students who can achieve better scores are recognized—all others will be alienated. Access to English language resources is much more limited in smaller towns and rural areas than in cities.

Moreover, school teachers are the ones who work closely with students. In schools, we receive ideological messages about our social positions within the larger structure. Classroom teachers already arrive with their own ideological baggage and transfer it to students through classroom practice. There is a need to explore how ELE is used to create a class hierarchy in Taiwan.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study first was to explore how English language educators portray ELE in Taiwan and second, to understand how the English language is used to create social distinction between Taiwanese social classes. Although the government has been promoting the importance of ELE for Taiwanese people, the meritocratic system in Taiwan already has reproduced social-class divisions based on who speaks English and who does not. The reality is that in the job market, whoever speaks English has greater opportunities. Furthermore, English speakers are much more likely to come from a higher social class. Will ELE help those students in the lower class to become upwardly mobile? Or, do social barriers prevent them from moving up the social ladder? In other words, does access to the English language, or a lack thereof, affect their social mobility? These are the questions I had in mind and discussed with participants in interviews.

Researchers, such as Chuang, Chern, Her, Liu, and Liou, focus on English teaching methodologies, including grammar translation and communicative language teaching

methods (CLT). This is particularly true when CLT was implemented in elementary school courses during the period of educational reform in 1998 (Chuang, 1998; Chern, 2002; Her, 2007; Liou, 2001; Liu, 1998). These researchers have examined the implementation of English language teaching methods and of situations that teachers encounter at schools. However, there is little research about how ELE plays a role in creating social boundaries between Taiwanese citizenry. Although ELE is very important for Taiwanese people, with regards to economic internationalization, we must research further the influence of ELE that has contributed in part to social reproduction in Taiwan.

The potential significance of this study is its contribution to the literature on ELE and social reproduction in Taiwan. This study looks into ELE in Taiwan from a unique angle. It examines social reproduction through the *social effects* of ELE. I believe that becoming proficient in the English language is important. Yet, it is also necessary to look at other social factors, such as the perpetuation of class conflict through English language education.

Social reproduction often has analyzed race (Macleod, 1995) and social class through schooling (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Lareau, 2000; Willis, 1977). In this study, I examined the social reproduction of class through English language education in order to bring a critical lens to English language learning and to understand how participants interpret the phenomenon of English learning and its perpetuation of social hierarchy. Lin (1999) found that English is always utilized as a language for educational and socioeconomic advancement, and it has become the symbol of the ability to access valuable social resources. Tsai (2010) looked into language skills and status attainment and found that status attainment has to do with higher levels of educational attainment. Although Lin and Tsai mentioned that the use of the English language gradually has been seen as a new fashion and social symbol in Hong

Kong and Taiwan, the researchers did not study social reproduction based on English language education. My study contributes to the literature in social reproduction and combines social reproduction theory with the phenomenon of English language education in Taiwan. It goes beyond studying the mechanics of English language teaching and moves toward understanding the implication of English language learning for larger social dynamics, such as class stratification.

Research Questions

1. How does the discourse of these participants reveal their understanding of social meaning of ELE in Taiwan?
2. How do English speaking Taiwanese educators position themselves relative to others as they discuss English language education in Taiwan? Do they see their English ability as a mark of social distinction?

Methodology

Phenomenology investigates the meaning of life experience of a small group of people by focusing on a concept or phenomenon as participants have experienced it. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to understand individuals' behaviors and experiences with a phenomenon and to understand how individuals perceive and act upon objects of experience. Also, language is the main medium through which meaning is constructed and conveyed (Creswell, 1997/2012; Schram, 2005). Therefore, the meaning making of a particular aspect of an experience can be revealed through dialogue and reflection.

Phenomenological researchers focus on what those experiences mean for people who are able to provide a detailed description of them. Phenomenology allowed me to explore the

essence of English teachers' experiences and meanings related to ELE and social status in Taiwan. In Chapter 3, I will address the methodology in full detail.

This study was conducted using qualitative interviews with the primary goal of exploring English educators' understanding of ELE and how ELE is used to create social boundaries within Taiwanese subgroups. The goal of phenomenological interviews is to help participants reconstruct their experience within the topic of a study (McKay, 2006; Seidman, 1998). The approach of the interview is first to create the context of participants' experience. The second is to reconstruct participants' experience within the context. The third is to help participants reflect on what the implication of their experience means to them. The phenomenological data analysis of this study was based on statements and themes from those interviews related to the participants' experience.

This study questions whether knowledge of the English language is the path to climbing the social ladder and whether such knowledge perpetuates social-class status. Part of my job as a researcher is to analyze participants' discourse about their ELE experiences, chiefly those that enlighten and reveal social structure phenomenon, such as differences in class status. At the same time, I connected participants' attitudes toward English language education and their experiences to social reproduction theory. This study focuses on the role ELE plays in social-class inequality within the Taiwanese society. The reason for centering my dissertation on social reproduction and ELE is that it remains an understudied area. With the impact of globalization, the Taiwanese government has seen the economic realities of a world that communicates predominantly in English. For political and economic reasons, the utility of the English language is recognized by people in Taiwan. For many Taiwanese, English has become a key to economic and social advancement. Based on my research, I

believe that speaking the English language well also contributes to social exclusion based on socioeconomic class. I argue that English educators should confront these issues. And hopefully, Taiwanese educators will teach the English language from a more critical standpoint.

Limitations of the Study

In any research, it is difficult to study everything. I used a qualitative interview method, but there was limited access to the classroom in Taiwan. From conversations with potential English teachers, they did not feel comfortable having a researcher in their classrooms. Therefore, I did not consider observing classroom practice at this time. My interviews began in the fall of 2011. Participants included 15 English language educators who are currently teaching in elementary schools. The research site is a rural area in southern Taiwan. The smaller sample from a specific rural region and the limited length of interview time impedes my ability to generalize the results to the entire population of Taiwan. Another limitation is that I did not receive enough lengthy answers from participants' journal writings, and the purpose of using journal writing is to allow participants to share more about their status and feelings of being able to use English. However, participants did not spend a great deal of time writing their journals. Thus, I conducted interviews to collect much of my information.

Definition of Key Terms

- 1) English language education (ELE): The reason I use ELE instead of English as a foreign (EFL) is because English is seen as an international and global language in Taiwan, the languages are interchangeable, and in this study, ELE covers a broader area, including English language classes, skills, and different types of English examinations.
- 2) Buxiban culture: Buxiban (補習班) is translated from Mandarin, and it means cram schools. Buxibans operate as a shadow education attached to regular education, depending on student needs, including mathematics, science, foreign languages, arts, music, etc. Taiwanese parents believe that by sending their children to buxibans for enrichment classes, they will gain an advantage and be able to pass college entrance exams sufficiently enough to enter prestigious universities in Taiwan. For adults, due to the requirement of their jobs, they may have to attend buxibans to gain English language proficiency or to acquire a certificate for computer skills. In Taiwan, attending buxibans has become a culture.
- 3) Japanization: In this context, Japanization means to replace Taiwanese language and culture with Japanese language and culture.
- 4) The General English Proficiency Test (GEPT): The Language Training & Testing Center (LTTC) has accepted commissions from the Ministry of Education and the Central Personnel Administration to hold special venue of the test in Taiwan (LTTC, 2007). The GEPT in LTTC has been supported since 1999 by the MOE as part of its promotion of lifelong learning and to encourage the general study of English in Taiwan. The GEPT intends to provide a fair, valid, and reliable gauge for each level of ability on English. The GEPT is divided into five levels with content appropriate to each level, and each

level incorporates listening, reading, writing, and speaking components. The elementary, intermediate, and high-intermediate levels are administered twice a year, the advanced level once a year and the superior level upon request. Various government institutions as well as private enterprises have used the GEPT as a reference to evaluate the English proficiency levels of their applicants, employees, and students. The test also is used by hundreds of public and private schools as an admissions, placement, or graduation criterion.

- 5) Preparatory program for elementary teachers of English: In 1999, the Taiwan Ministry of Education has established preparation programs for Taiwanese people interested in teaching elementary students English. These examinees must earn a bachelor degree from an English language department either in Taiwan or a foreign country. They must pass the English proficiency test and an oral exam before they may enter the University of Teacher Education and start classes in both elementary education and TESOL classes. In TESOL classes, examinees must take classes to learn English teaching pedagogies, including English speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Examinees must learn English pronunciation to teach reading, understand grammatical rules to teach sentence structure and composition, and create various topics of daily life to teach speaking and listening. After they finish the education program, they must have student teaching in the elementary school for one year, then pass a qualification exam. After they pass the exam, they will be assigned to a school that needs English teachers.
- 6) English Village: Due to the lack of an English-speaking environment in Taiwan, the local governments, in cooperation with the local educational association, began building English villages in several cities and townships and these classes in English villages offer

elementary students chances to practice communicative skills in English. In 2007, there were 39 English villages established in either elementary schools or middle schools within a three-year time period. Because of Taiwan's low birth rate, there are empty classrooms in certain schools, so the local government built simulated-teaching environments with different scenarios and recruited native English speakers to practice communicative skills with Taiwanese elementary school and middle school students.

7) School years:

Country	United States	Taiwan
Elementary school	Grades 1-5	Grades 1-6
Middle school	Grades 6-8	Grades 7-9
High school	Grades 9-12	Grades 10-12

Taiwanese has a different school system than in the United States: The elementary level is from first to sixth grade, middle school is from seventh to ninth grade, and high school is from 10th to 12th grade.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review will bring together studies and theories related to ELE under globalization, social stratification, and social politics that influence English competence. The first section will address how globalization impacts the Taiwanese economy as well as English language education (ELE) and policy in Taiwan. The second section will address the social divisions as well as class conflicts and struggles within the Taiwanese context. The last part will present a social capital theoretical framework.

Taiwanese Economy under Globalization

Globalization is defined as broad, worldwide social relations in different nations linked through the interaction of governments, people, and investments (Guillén, 2001). Globalization is driven by policies that open economies nationally and internationally. Many governments have negotiated and established international agreements to promote trade of products, services, and investments. Technology is one element of globalization that eliminates the constraints of geographical boundaries and has become the tool for pursuing economic opportunities of investment and trade (Globalization 101, 2010; Guillén, 2001; Li, 2008; Zhu, 2004).

During the past decade, Taiwan has been influenced significantly by globalization, especially in industry and education (Her, 2007; Liao, 2008; Yang, 2008; Yang, 2003; Zhong, 2006). After Taiwan transformed from exporting agriculture to international trade and investment in high-tech products, it became a “developed,” rather than a “developing” nation. During the transformation, Taiwan’s open market attracted foreign investment, foreign labor, and a larger immigrant population; these factors collided with local lifestyles

and pushed Taiwanese people into changing their perspectives on economic globalization (Chow, 2002).

Yang (2001) argues that globalization is the process of integrating economic systems by using the global Internet network, among others, to increase international investment, production, and finance, to market merchandise worldwide. This process influences economic systems in many countries. Because state of the art technology increases communication among nations for business transactions, many developing countries have reformed their economic systems in order to connect their businesses with developed countries. Although supporters of globalization maintain that it helps poor countries develop economically and raise their society's standard of living, opponents argue that it is an extension of capitalism that benefits corporations in western nations at the expense of local labor markets, enterprise, and cultures (Chen, 2003).

Although globalization primarily affects the economy, it also impacts local, social, political, and cultural dimensions of nations. According to Liao (2005), with the spread of globalization, Western countries, such as the United States, are global leaders, and non-Western countries, such as Taiwan, are followers. Liao explains that in Taiwan, some people are positive about the impact of globalization on the economy. They also believe Taiwanese children should learn the English language at an early age so they can become competitive in the global market. When the Taiwanese Ministry of Education implemented English language education (ELE) at the primary-school level, for some people, globalization represented an extension of colonialism that continues to damage Taiwanese children's identities and ways of thinking. There is a fear that Taiwanese children will be unable to maintain local languages and culture.

Block and Cameron (2002) state that globalization and technology have brought the distance of worldwide social relations closer and that individuals can regularly communicate with others via the Internet without ever meeting face to face. Language is the primary medium for these social interactions, and global communication requires a shared linguistic code. Beaugrande (1999) argues that the emphasis on a global economy often perpetuates the global spread of English as the communication tool to break down national boundaries. It seems that speaking English is the way to increase one's economic position in the world.

English has become the dominant language in many fields of activity, such as transportation, industry, tourism, and business; therefore, people who are not native English speakers are interested in learning English. Currently, people worldwide use English as a common communication tool, and it is continuing to spread universally (Phillipson, 1992). The impact of linguistic and cultural dominance of English in Asia has reached the point where English is the language of commerce, politics, and tourism (Crystal, 2003; Guo & Beckett, 2007; Okano, 2006). Like Japan and Korea, Taiwan also is promoting the importance of learning English and emphasizing its place in communicative competence.

English Language Education in Taiwan

Liao (2005) argues that English as an international language (EIL) has become a widespread phenomenon. Non-native English speakers outnumber native English speakers in using English as a communicative language around the world. The widespread impact of the English language needs to be understood both from the context of political domination in the colonial era to the dominance of the world powers over less powerful countries. English has become an international language not simply because of its popularity but because of its accompanying political, military, economic, and cultural might (Kachru, 1998; Liao, 2005).

This is the reason we use American English as a standard in school. It also misleads English teachers' thoughts, and they think American English is the only standardized international language worldwide. Liao claims that English as an international language should be like global English, which is defined as English varieties, which means the English language is used not only in native-speaking countries but is used with different accents, purposes, and functions in other countries. Liao states that Taiwanese people should jump out of the circle of a mono-model understanding of EIL, especially in terms of teaching approaches. We should incorporate different communicative language teaching (CLT) methods.

People learning another language, especially English, will benefit a great deal in expanding their horizons and will increase educational opportunities and their businesses profits (Su, 1990). Sommer's (2007) research found that Taiwanese people are concerned with the country's global economic position and believe English plays a crucial role in the future of Taiwan. Without obtaining a high proficiency in English skills, Taiwanese workers will be unable to compete for jobs with the increasing number of foreign companies doing business in East Asia, nor will local companies be able to compete effectively against foreign companies (Her, 2007).

The political, economic, and cultural influence of the United States and Great Britain are speeding the spread of the English language worldwide (Kachru, 1992). This process makes people believe that a deficiency in English language ability is equated with their inability to survive in the world (Graddol, 2006; Kawai, 2007). Kawai explains that the Japanese Advisory Commission suggested in 2000 that the prime minister adopt the English language as an official language in Japan. This proposal regarding ELE has different measures that aim to improve Japanese people's English language proficiency by introducing

ELE into the primary schools and adopting English as the language of instruction for high school students.

Similar to Japan, Taiwan also has attempted to adopt English as an official language. The Taiwanese president announced that, like Hong Kong and Singapore, Taiwanese people should consider English as a second official language to enhance national competitiveness for integration within the international community (Her, 2007). Her (2007) explains that Taiwan has a close relationship with the United States. This relationship influences not only economic progress but also the impact on English language education. However, Her (2007) cautions that the Taiwan community must understand how non-native English-speaking countries are contributing to ELE.

Nunan (2003) describes how the sociopolitical phenomenon of global English has impacted educational policies and practice in the Asia-Pacific countries. The governments in these countries are introducing English as a compulsory subject for primary and secondary schools without adequately considering the implications of these policies and practices. These new policies and new “teaching approaches,” such as content-based instruction, communicative language teaching (Canale & Swain, 1980), and the use of English as a medium in class have impacted English instructor’s teaching. Nunan (2003) indicates that the occurrence of English as a global language has created a major impact on Taiwanese government’s thinking. The Taiwanese government intends to become a major economic global player and must understand the economic necessity of promoting English language learning.

Although Japanese people cannot deny the important role of English as an international language, the spread of global English is a form of linguistic imperialism

(Hashimoto, 2002; Kawai, 2007). Kubota (1998) studies the dominance of English language influences on the Japanese language and their viewpoints about language, culture, race, and identity. Japanese people are impacted by the worldview of native English speakers. English language education creates cultural and linguistic stereotypes of both the English language and Japanese people. The dominance of the English language has been promoted by English teaching, and it has maintained the social and cultural structure of inequality (Edge, 2003; Pennycook, 2007; Phillipson, 1992). Kubota (1998) discusses how the Japanese people have internalized an Anglo view of the world by learning English. Since America started trade with Japanese in the 19th century, the English language was studied in Japan. In particular, Japan's post-war political, social, and economic systems were strongly influenced by the American system and the English language. The Japanese people have adopted native English speakers' views of the world by learning English, and Kubota states that the role of English language affects the formation of what the Japanese people think about language, culture, ethnicity, and identity.

The Taiwanese people have a similar stereotype of English language speakers. Accents and racial distinctions play important roles in promoting the English language. Taiwanese people see the English language as a highly valued form of cultural capital, and the English language in Taiwan is perceived as a means of raising social status to empower oneself (Tetrault, 2003; Graddol, 2006). Indeed, the Taiwanese people learn English as a foreign language, and as the need is becoming greater, English language teaching becomes a market with a high profit. Not only are elementary schools beginning to teach the English language, but the numbers of English language buxibans are booming to accommodate individuals' different purposes for learning English. According to the Taiwanese

government, English language skills always are connected to international competition in business, but the question is, does learning English internationalize Taiwan? Furthermore, English native speakers from America, Canada, or England usually are welcomed in Taiwan in terms of teaching the English language, because these foreigners are preferred as teachers because English is their native tongue. Therefore, Taiwanese see their English as the “standard.”

Languages and Politics in Taiwan

Although the English language plays an important role in the economy and in education in Taiwan, it is not the main language spoken on a daily basis. Historically speaking, Taiwan underwent different stages of occupation, activating a language shift phenomenon during different periods of time. In Taiwan, language policies usually are linked to politics. Thus, language shifts take place when socio-economic and political changes occur (Baker, 2001; Beaugrande, 1999; Chan, Cheng, & Yeh, 2004). Sandel (2003) used Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of habitus and studied the history of language policies and practice, as well as how Taiwanese people’s language choices have been shaped by language ideology in Taiwan. For example, languages in Taiwan are classified into a “national language” and “local dialects,” which are based on promoting one language, such as Japanese/Mandarin, but simultaneously repress others. The national language is seen as “high class,” and ethnic dialects are considered “low class.” The speakers choose to practice the language that has more market value and attached privilege.

To understand why a society values a particular language more than another, we need to look at the history of language practices in that particular society. Therefore, there is a

need to understand the reform of language policies prior to understanding the spread of the English language in Taiwan.

Historically, the island of Taiwan first was inhabited by the Taiwanese indigenous people, followed by the period of colonial Dutch occupation in 17th century. Although the main purpose of colonizing the island (which the Dutch called Formosa) was as a mode of trade and agriculture investment in Asia, the Dutch also embarked on a campaign to “civilize” the indigenous people by Christianizing the local population and suppressing cultural activities. The Dutch also set up schools under Dutch control to teach aboriginal people to read and write the Dutch language (Wu, 2008; Council of Indigenous People, 2010).

The 38 years of Dutch colonization ended with the invasion of the Min Dynasty, and soon after the Taiwan island was taken over by Qing Dynasty in 1683. That was when the language of Qing Dynasty, Mandarin, started to have effects on the local Taiwanese population. The Qing Dynasty maintained control until the island was given to the Japanese following the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895. Japan acquired its first colony, the island of Taiwan, to show it was capable of spreading civilization beyond its borders (Kuo, 2003; Wei, 2006; Wu, 2008, Reach to teach, 2009).

During the 50-year occupation of Taiwan, Japan sought to assimilate Taiwanese people into Japanese culture through education (Stevenson, 2010). Under assimilative education practices, Japan prohibited the use of Taiwanese and other dialects. The Japanization of Taiwan endangered Taiwanese local languages and cultures (Bird, Hope, & Taylor, 2004; Yao, 2001; Zhou, 2003). Consequently, the Taiwanese people acknowledged the value of Japanese education in providing upward social mobility. The

Taiwanese people may have been attracted to Japanese language policies in an attempt to gain greater access to upward social mobility at the time (Stevenson, 2010).

The Taiwanese people went through another assimilation campaign when Taiwan was returned to mainland China in 1945. During this same time, mainland China was undergoing an inner power struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists. When the Nationalists moved to Taiwan, they did not consider indigenous Taiwanese people as Chinese because they had lived under Japanese rule for 50 years. The Nationalist government established the National Language Movement (NLM) to standardize a Mandarin language policy (MLP). Furthermore, the Taiwanese national language policies forced language shifts from indigenous languages and other dialects to Mandarin during the 1950s (Chan, Cheng, & Yeh, 2004; Hsiau, 2010).

Nonetheless, for centuries the Taiwanese people communicated in different languages (Bird, Hope, & Taylor, 2004; Yao, 2001; Zhou, 2003). Some 2% of the Taiwanese population is made up of indigenous tribes who arrived in approximately 4000 B.C., and most speak Austronesian languages. Another 12% are Hakka people who arrived from southern China in the 16th and 19th centuries; these people speak Hakka, a Chinese regional dialect. The largest percentage of the population, 73%, are from the Fujian province in southern China and speak Taiyu (Taiwanese, southern Ming). The remaining 13% of the population came to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-Shek, the first president of Taiwan, when he fled from the Communists during the Chinese Civil War of 1949. The majority of these people speak Mandarin, better known as *Guoyu* in Taiwan (Council of Indigenous People, 2010; Zeitoun & Yu, 2005). After they took over Taiwan from the Japanese government in 1949, the political party Kuomintang (KMT) enforced Mandarin as the dominant language.

The KMT held a negative attitude toward the Japanese language, indigenous languages, as well as other dialects. The KMT claimed that learning Mandarin was necessary to unify the nation in order to recover mainland China from the Communists. Similar to the Japanese assimilation mandate, the KMT replaced Japanese with Mandarin (Sandel, 2003). It was not until the lift of martial law in 1987, along with political change and the move toward multiculturalism in Taiwan, that people started to have a new perspective about native languages.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) approved the implementation of native culture instruction at the primary and secondary education levels in 1997. A further action was to add Taiwanese/native languages to the curriculum for Grades 1-9. However, with the poor planning and implementation of the new language policy to maintain the nation's indigenous language, it is not likely that Taiwanese/native languages will survive the competition with Mandarin and English (Chan, Cheng, & Yeh, 2004). Furthermore, social mobility, urbanization, industrialization, and internationalization are contributing factors in the momentum of language shifts. To be more precise, people will choose the language associated with upward mobility (Chan, Cheng, & Yeh, 2004). Language policies are enforced by law, but with time, the Taiwanese people will begin to recognize the power of language and begin to identify with the values that language represents.

MacDougall and Foon (1976) examined how competence in English can become a vehicle to upward social mobility in Singapore. Since the British colonial period, many Singaporeans perceive English as a necessary language to upward occupational mobility. Parents attempt to put their children in English-medium schools so that the children may gain social advantages. Competence or lack of competence in English has become either a

gateway or barrier to reach a higher status of employment in Singapore. And Taiwan is no exception

English Language Policy in Taiwan

Historically, Taiwanese ELE follows the standard of North American English. After World War II, the United States used Taiwan as a military base for its anti-Communist tactics in Asia, giving Taiwan military and financial support to fight communism in Mainland China (Price, 2005). Because of the hegemonic relationship with the United States, American English and American culture influences Taiwan society (Wang, 2000). In 1949, English was the only foreign language listed in language policies of the Taiwanese education system. Beginning in 1968, a nine-year mandatory free education initiative was introduced, and English courses became necessary for junior high school students (Su, 1990). During that period, English was just one of many languages that students needed to study in order to pass the entrance examinations to enter high school and a university. As the tide of globalization swept Taiwan at the beginning of the 1980s, the English language began to penetrate Taiwanese society, and learning English became part of the dominant culture of Taiwan (Beaser, 2006).

To be able to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the MOE recognized the importance of the English language. Historically, English courses were taught only in middle schools and high schools, but in 1998 MOE planned to have students start to learn English in the fifth grade (Oladejo, 2006; Su, 2006). As in Japan and South Korea, Taiwan promotes English language learning and emphasizes communicative competence. The structure of English courses in high schools had been grammar-based—most students rarely practiced speaking English in the classroom, thus creating a gap in

reading and oral competence. Recognizing this gap, the MOE decided to add a communicative-based English component as a course in elementary schools beginning in 2001 in order to increase the quality of education and to meet the demand for international business competition (MOE, 2001, 2003, 2004a/2004b).

In 2003, learning English had become a social and educational movement for the Taiwanese people. Then in 2005, toward the end of the reform of primary and secondary education, MOE became aware of changes in higher education in other nations. The governments of South Korean, Japan, and China started to provide funding to internationalize universities.

The Taiwanese government's plan was to advance the country by concentrating efforts on improving the English language competence of its population. However, the educational system reform was not the only step toward English language competence; another project known as the Challenge 2008, National Development Plan (2002-2007) was released in 2002. As an educational system reform, this development plan is not a language policy, but the English language is prioritized and targeted. According to the Taiwanese government, being able to speak English is taking the nation one step closer to the international standard. Therefore, an English-speaking environment needed to be created to advance people's English competence. The goals of this plan are to accomplish the implementation of 10 key individual subplans; several areas of implementation were designed: (a) development of an English living environment; (b) the distance between city and rural schools was shortened to allow students equal opportunities to learn English; (c) internationalization of college education, that is, using English as a medium of instruction to create an English-speaking environment in order to recruit students worldwide; (d)

enhancement of government employees' English proficiency; and (e) the promotion of the English and international cultural exchange (Council for Economic Planning and Development, 2002).

Mok (2007) posits that to respond to the pressure of globalization, many Asian nations have reviewed and reformed their educational systems to be more marketized, privatized, and corporatized to improve administrative management. Mok asserts that Asian educational restructures and reforms are clearly influenced by the Western public management-oriented system. For example, many Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, have followed those academic practices demonstrated by the West through the development of educational reforms such as expanding the numbers of universities so students have more opportunities to get a higher education, reducing class sizes, creating an evaluation system for college educators, establishing English language teaching programs for preparing Taiwanese teachers, adding English classes at the elementary school, and using new English teaching methods (e.g., CLT and English-medium instruction).

English is a foreign language in Taiwan, yet unlike other foreign languages, English enjoys a unique status and prestige because it is the preferred language for international communication. The belief in social mobility is the rationale for learning the English language, and an English language competence represents an acknowledgement of social prestige. English not only is a global language, but the Taiwanese must look beyond the study of English in terms of acquisition because the nation's peoples need to understand how diverse people interpret the social position of the English language. Additionally, we need to examine how the predominance of the English language creates internal conflicts and

competition among groups. The role of ideology in language reveals how people make sense of the social order (Seargeant, 2009). Price (2005) critically argues that the political discourse in Taiwan has created the ideological function of education by making English an integral part of the educational system without considering linguistic and ethnic pluralism in Taiwan. Therefore, tensions have arisen between cultural nationalism and the process of ELE innovation.

From the outside, it seems that the Taiwanese people benefit by learning English because it will lead to better jobs, but it is important to look within and among Taiwanese sub-groups and to acknowledge who has benefited the most from English language policies. Policymakers have higher education and elevated social statuses. The policies they are implementing usually send the message to students that anyone who can achieve the requirements to gain access to higher education, as did the policymakers themselves, then can have better jobs in the future. The purpose of ELE cannot be seen as simply the development of English competence by acquiring the hegemonic language over other languages in Taiwan. The Taiwanese people need to understand how the educational system contributes to the reproduction of differential social capital and group hierarchy in Taiwan (Bourdieu, 1977; Madigan, 2002).

Social Stratification in Taiwan

A Taiwanese government document, "*The Story of Taiwan*" (1999), perpetuates the belief that social class is connected to the distribution of societal values. Political strength, financial status, and occupational prestige are the main factors of social divisions. Sheu (2000) explains that when we discuss social inequality, it can be viewed from a political perspective. In other words, whoever has the most political strength obtains the most

policymaking power, whoever owns the fortune is at the top of the socioeconomic status ladder, and whoever has the higher education and occupational disposition has the most social prestige.

Similarly, Wu (1997) discusses that in the past, class corresponded to an ethnic group, and therefore, Mainland Chinese (Mainlanders) constitute the majority of the upper class and the middle class, and Taiwanese and aborigines were regarded as the working and poor classes. Currently, Taiwan is a modern consumer society in which class is measured by wealth and by the commodities that one can afford to buy. As Taiwanese society transformed from an agricultural to an industrial enterprise, and then moved to technological exporting, Wu found that political power, financial status, education, and culture no longer belong to the same group of people but to different and smaller groups. He views this as a sign of social progress toward more social equity, although inequality remains a social ill in contemporary Taiwan.

In Taiwanese society, people usually are measured by their socio-economic positions, occupational reputations, and lifestyle. Wu (1997) categorized Taiwanese social groups into six classes: (a) the bourgeois, the managers at larger industries, higher-grade professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and government officials; (b) lower-grade professionals (accountants, pharmacists), higher-grade technicians (engineers), managers at smaller industries, and teachers; (c) white-collar laborers such as office employees, nurses, and lower-grade administrators; (d) small proprietors and small-business owners; (d) farmers; and (e) laborers such as low-grade technicians, supervisors of blue-collar workers, and technical and nontechnical laborers. Wu utilizes this framework of social stratification to discuss social mobility while Tsay (2002) argues that there is no equal society because everyone

comes with different individual talents and from different family backgrounds. Tsay proposes that the process of social mobility begins when individuals experience inequality and try to change their situation. Through this process, individuals attempt to change their circumstances--and this begins a social transformation. Universal education offers the best response for addressing social inequality, Tsay found. However, Tsay does not address the fact that not everyone has access to equal education. Some sectors of society come from different backgrounds and from multiple generations that encountered unequal social structures.

By the same token, education plays a role in the process of social mobility. In Taiwan, education is always the key to accelerate mobility and to change the social status of families (Fang, 2003; Fu, 2004; Perng & Chang, 2005; Wu, 1997; Yuan, 2002). People acquire educational skills not only for national economic development purposes but also for their own social needs. However, Pan and Yu (1999) argue that “scholarly work is superior to everything” (p. 5), which presents an image to students that higher education is the only way to a better future. The main purpose of schooling has become an environment for preparing for entrance exams of high schools and colleges. In 1994, in order to expand access to education for students, people from nongovernment groups, such as the Humanistic Education Foundation, the Education Reform Association of Taiwan, and the National Alliance of Parents Organization, united in a political movement and petitioned the government to reform the educational system (Tu, 2007). This effort failed because educational reform is a site of political conflict and functions to perpetuate social class and cultural reproduction. Li (2007) says that Taiwan is a patrilineal society, which means an individual has the potential to inherit the father’s social status. The father’s educational

levels and job types also will influence the decisions the children make regarding their choices of education and occupation. In fact, Lin (1999) approves that both parents' backgrounds and education levels can influence their children's choices of education and occupation. Middle-class children choose the track that leads to high school and university, and working-class children tend to choose the track that takes them to a vocational school; therefore, those who graduate with a degree in higher education will find better jobs and higher salary than those who do not advance through higher education (Chang, Hsueh, & Hwang, 1996; Lin, 1999; Marsh, 2003). Li (2007) is critical of the Taiwan social system for making the Taiwanese people believe in meritocracy; as long as the people study hard and earn a degree in higher education, they are able to gain status and power, but the fact is that cultural capital plays a big role in family inheritance, which leads to educational and social inequalities, then reproduces social class.

Chang (2006) argues that school curricula usually are designated in the political arena, because schools are places that reproduce social values. The educational system in Taiwan perpetuates the idea that as long as we receive an education, our social status has nothing to do with family background. The system also promotes the false ideology that social stratification as well as racial and gender inequality do not exist. Macleod (1995) challenges this idea of meritocracy by arguing that it actually entrenches the tracking system and perpetuates social structures that restrict the actions of individuals. Bowles and Gintis (1977) also argue that education is determined by social agencies, such as the economy, and that schooling reproduces and legitimizes the inequality of social class structure from one generation to another.

The educational system reform in Taiwan included the implementation of ELE at the elementary school level and the replacement of the one-time National Entrance Exams for high schools and universities with multiple entrance system. The MOE also decentralized its power to the local educational bureau. The purpose of the reform is to eliminate pressure on students to take a high-stakes exam and to give them additional opportunities to enter higher education. The social system already is hierarchically shaped, and it is hard to break the boundaries to give every student an equal opportunity to receive an education. This is true of ELE. Schooling in urban and rural areas is different in terms of accessing resources. Rural schools often lack adequate resources. Therefore, I think the new educational system will still reproduce the same unequal status quo.

Education versus Social Stratification

The Taiwanese government, as do other Asian Pacific countries, has been promoting educational reform by revitalizing schools to establish a more rigorous curriculum and give students an equal learning opportunity (Clark, 2002; Perng & Chang, 2005). On the other hand, Fu (2004) states that education is not a neutral mechanism; rather, it involves many political movements. In Taiwan, the government assigns the head of the MOE. Therefore, decision makers in MOE work closely with the director's allies and implement the governing party's philosophy of education. Unfortunately, these policymakers are the elite and make decisions on the school curriculum for all students. They support an ideology built upon meritocracy. Taiwanese people believe education creates an equal opportunity for everyone, especially those who come from the upper social classes. Therefore, people in Taiwan have a higher expectation of pursuing a higher education. Taiwanese people believe that the more education one has, the higher social and cultural capital can be achieved (Fu, 2004).

Chang (2006) argues that education can be an instrument of hegemony when the culture and values of the dominant group are presented as school knowledge and regarded as national values. This is, in order to fit in with the mainstream values of education (such as the buxiban culture and higher education), working-class and lower-class parents do not have as much money and access for their children to obtain the same level of education as middle-class and higher-class families. Therefore, education creates a phenomenon and the reproduction of an unequal society.

Furthermore, Tsai (2010) explains that education is a major mechanism of social stratification and that the standard of meritocracy is tied to achievement orientation. The school system is not a neutral institution, but it is an academically competitive environment that conveys a message that hard work comes first, rewards will come later. If students fail, that means they did not work hard enough, so they deserve to be at the bottom. To fulfill the roles that society approves, students must internalize mainstream values of individual achievement: attending classes, obeying the rules, studying hard, getting good grades (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Lareau, 2000; Mehan, 1992). One's position in an industrial society is determined by the education level attained. Tsai's (2010) study also examines how people in Taiwan advance their socioeconomic status by becoming more proficient in a variety of languages, such as Mandarin or English.

Due to meritocracy, education has become a mechanism for producing social division. The result of this mechanism is the unequal distribution of educational opportunities. These opportunities are based on the socioeconomic position of an individual's family, which leads to unequal educational accomplishment and the likelihood of a low-paying job (Fu, 2004; Tzeng, 2004; Yuan, 2002). Furthermore, Chang (2006)

proposes that education reform perpetuates social inequality. Prior to the educational system reform of 2000, two national entrance examinations were available to students as pathways to higher education, one during the junior high school level through senior high or at vocational schools, and the other given in high school or at vocational schools through the university level. There were issues with social inequality, but students from different social classes would have to take the exam, which meant everyone at least had the opportunity to be considered for access to higher education. However, Chen and Liu (2008) and Zhou (2010) argue that even though students from lower-class backgrounds have the opportunity to take the exams, it does not mean they are as well prepared as students from the upper classes. Furthermore, *buxibans* are part of the Taiwanese educational experience (Chen & Liu, 2008; Zhou, 2010). Students from the elite class are more likely to attend *buxibans* so that they can reinforce what they have learned at regular schools and thus boost their chances of doing well on the exams and gaining entry into a university. In contrast, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not have the resources to sufficiently prepare for entrance exams.

Although the reform of the educational system has broadened the path to higher education through a combination of recommendations and examinations, the reform also has been used as a parallel to the traditional joint exam, where students are evaluated not only by the test scores but also by their individual talents/abilities (e.g., being able to play piano, painting, performance). The new system affects the disadvantaged student who comes from a lower socioeconomic background because in Taiwanese society, the education system creates social inequality (Chang, 2006). The choices in educational attainment that parents and students make are determined by costs, access to educational resources, and expected

benefits from educational alternatives. The new education system provides more ways to access higher education, and at the same time it becomes more complicated in terms of understanding school information, especially for lower socioeconomic families who already have limited access to education (Breen & Jonsson, 2005).

On the contrary, Pan and Yu (1999) determined that the entrance examinations were fully supported for their openness and fairness, because universities used test scores to select competent students from high schools. However, these exams bar those students who do not achieve high academic domains and those talented students who do not perform well on pencil-and-paper tests. Because the traditional entrance examinations have been criticized, decision makers believe the alternative systems would be more beneficial to most students.

Pan and Yu (1999) explain that the traditional education system was centralized for years and that most of the education policies were decided by the central government in Taiwan. The educational system reform is an opportunity to deregulate policies and take them back from government control in order to localize these education policies. There is a tendency to believe that the less control the government has, the better education will be. It seems that people believe that the new educational system will break the boundary of social class and that every student will have an equal opportunity to achieve at school.

However, Pan and Yu (1999) express concern about the deregulation of the central government in educational matters. The new educational reform requires a larger budget, which means a reduction in class and school size, and as well as new curricula. The central government controls the budget for education, and after the deregulation, the education bureau in rural areas may face a disadvantage in collecting funding, unlike schools in big cities where people have greater access to educational budgets. Additionally, Yuan (2002)

proposes that the purpose of the educational reform is to create an open and diverse education system. Nonetheless, the new system still uses the exam-based option and promotes the belief that the importance of higher education is in receiving a diploma. However, there are questions about whether the expansion of higher education in Taiwan equalizes social inequality. After the educational reform, the number of universities and colleges has grown to 159 over the past 15 years (MOE, 2013). Although the growth of the university system provides more chances for students to advance educationally, in Chang and Lin's research (2013), upper-class students have more opportunities to seek lower cost tuition and prestigious public universities while working-class students can choose only higher-tuition and lower-ranking private universities. Ironically, the Taiwanese government offers more funding to public universities than to private ones, so Chang and Lin do not think the expanded higher educational system helps help to break down the boundaries of social hierarchy. Moreover, in 2014, the MOE has a new policy for secondary education, again, to release students' stress from preparing for entrance exams for high school; the Basic Competence Test for Junior High School Students no longer exists; and students can enter high school by applying to prospective schools or by being recommended by teachers. Lee (2013) found that the new policy seems to help those students from lower status and cannot go to buxibans, but the new policy is actually more complicated than the original one. In the new policy, students still must take the Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students exam so that it can be determined what students have learned in middle school, and the test includes a new subject, English listening. Unlike those who can choose to attend their favorite high school, students can go only to the high schools in the district of their household registration. Also, to increase opportunities to enter high schools, students

can take not only the tests for academic subjects but they also can take tests for skills, and the skills here are art, music, or dance. Therefore, the new policy is like old wine in a new bottle. Whether it will release students' stress and solve the gap of educational resources between urban and rural areas remains a question (Hui, 1997; Xie, 2011).

ELE in Taiwan

In the educational reform arena, and as seen in several governments in East Asia, including Japan, South Korea, and China, Taiwan has applied new educational policies, one of which is the introduction of ELE at the elementary school level. Scholars attribute the innovation of educational policies to globalization (Butler, 2005; Chern, 2002; Gorsuch, 2001; Su, 2006). In addition to heritage language use, English is a common second language in Taiwan due to English instruction in many private schools and English language television programs. English courses have been offered in the Taiwanese educational system since its establishment in the early 20th century and as early as the level of compulsory education since 1968. Students must take competitive examinations to demonstrate English ability, which dominates school life, because students will be allotted a space and will be tracked in schools at post-compulsory levels of education based on the results of the exams.

Statements about the global spread of the English language and its increasing socioeconomic importance worldwide became a slogan in the end of the 20th century. The use of the English language has become popular outside monolingual English-speaking societies, and the importance of the English language is the new key to advance one's socioeconomic status in Taiwan (Lin, 1999; Tsai, 2010).

Tsai (2010) explains that Taiwan is a multilingual society, and people's families provide a linguistic environment that will have an impact on their development of language

skills. Although parents generally are not good at speaking English, families with social status have more resources and a greater incentive to invest in their offspring's English-speaking skills. As long as the investment will be beneficial for their children, parents will make every effort to provide the resources for their children to become proficient in English. Moreover, the younger and better-educated generations are more interested in the use of English, which they regard as a new fashion or a new status symbol in Taiwan. In her study, Tsai used the data about family dynamics in Taiwan and studied how education and language play a role in the transmission of socioeconomic inequality across generations. She found that educational accomplishment and school-language skills, in both Mandarin and English, mediate effects on occupational status and earnings.

In 1945, Taiwan made Mandarin the official language, and thus the language gained prestige and high status. Currently, English language learning is seen as a rational response to labor-market demands. Although Tsai argues that the English language in Taiwan is not imposed by political powers, which means the use of the English language is not forced in formal education, the use of English only fulfills the need to be a part of the international globalized economic world.

Furthermore, ELE has been discussed during educational reforms. In 2001, in order to improve Taiwanese English language proficiency, learning English had become a social and educational movement for the Taiwanese people. As part of this movement and during the reform of the primary and secondary educational system, English classes were added to the third grade, and bilingual language learning environments were established. In 2005, English-taught courses were added at the university level (Liou, 2003; Xu, 2002). The Taiwanese MOE launched a project that focused on teaching and learning English in order to

enhance the quality of higher education. The priority of the project was to internationalize Taiwan's higher education system (National Development Plan, 2008). Li (2008a) found that university students started to learn more English once the policies of the MOE were set in place. Although the new policies have been implemented, the only way to evaluate a student's English proficiency is still by examination.

Today's university begins teaching subjects in English (University of Yuan Ze Campus News, 2009), and meanwhile, graduation requirements include taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). To graduate from a university, the required score for the TOEFL is 500, and for the GEPT, a medium level must be achieved. It seems that ELE plays an important role as a gatekeeper not only in higher education but also as a gateway to upward social mobility. Furthermore, effective in 2015, MOE added new requirement to ELE at secondary level: an English listening test will be added to the English language subject in the Comprehensive Assessment Program. Li (2012) is critical of this new policy because he believes it will become a burden to students from disadvantaged groups. Unlike the middle-class or upper-class, Li (2010) continues, parents with lower socioeconomic status (SES) do not have cultural capital related to ELE, and these parents are hardly able to spare money for the children to attend the ELE buxiban, particularly if they reside in rural areas that lack ELE resources. Li found that students of low SES hardly learn English at the elementary level, and these students tend to give up when entering middle schools, so Li doubts that these students will be able to pass the ELE listening test that's required for admission to a high school or vocational school. Hence, it is known that being competent in a language is perceived as an investment of human capital (Schultz, 1961). Language development performs as a system of differences,

values, and social inclusion/exclusion. Being able to speak English is a domain of competence, which is an important tool or function for job performance. Linguistic capital not only is human capital but also social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

Theoretical Framework

When the subject of social inequality in Taiwan is brought up, class reproduction intertwines with politics, economy, culture, and education (Chang, 2006). Furthermore, the educational system has been targeted and criticized as being a process of social and cultural reproduction (Tzeng, 2004; Yuan, 2002). Bourdieu (1977) proposed that every social form of the production process is at the same time a process of reproduction through the educational system in support of the unequal social structure and power relation between classes.

Bowles and Gintis (1977) argue that school education is used as a tool to reproduce social stratification by reconstructing the role of education in an economic system. Educational reformers believe in economic capitalism: The capitalists own and control the social production, and the function of the school system is to equip people based on their social origins to fit them at different economic and social levels within the social structure.

These education reformers convince people trust the evolution of the education system, which they say will lead to economic equality. The school system continues to reinforce the idea of a successful economy that is a result of better and higher education. Therefore, the purpose of education reform is to preserve and extend the capitalist order. Only students whose parents have attained a higher socioeconomic status can access better and higher education (Bowles and Gintis, 1977; Collins, 2009). The educational reforms in Taiwan are similar to what Collins (1979) describes as the rise of the credential system in the

United States in the 1960s. This leads to elite occupational access for those with more credentials. Collins recognizes the fact that education is a part of a system of cultural stratification. Therefore, the reason that students go to school is because they realize that more and more education is needed in Taiwanese society. In addition, higher levels of education are nearly essential for finding a good job.

During the education reform in 2000, the purpose was to decentralize control over the system but this also gave the culturally dominant groups a chance to maintain their benefits by founding schools at local and state governments. Upper-middle class reformers, completely disregarding the conflict among multiethnic groups, built the schools and generated a wave of cultural hegemony by revising the curriculum to shift to the greater goal of educational values. Collins (1979) explains that reformers tell the public that this educational plan leads to social mobility and elite positions within society. Not only does it attract most upper-class and upper-middle classes of students and families, but middle classes, and the most intelligent students from lower-classes who need to adopt the dominant group's culture if they want to remain in the system.

Nonetheless, Collins (1979) argues that college graduates can no longer count on acquiring elite status through elite jobs. There has been a larger pool of elite educated people, yet a smaller pool of elite positions available to them. As education credentials have become increasingly essential for employment, a great disparity occurred. First, the working class has limited or no access to higher education. Second, a large pool of highly educated people must compete more aggressively for jobs.

The educational system in Taiwan is no exception and requires higher educational credentials for job requirements. Indeed, Taiwanese scholars have studied social

stratification and education attainment, and they usually look at educational stratification from the family backgrounds, such as paternal educational levels, occupation types, and residency areas (Chang, 2006; Chen & Liu, 2004; Chiang, 2000; Kuan & Wang, 2008; Tzeng, 2004; Yuan, 2002). Although education reform has opened the gate to everyone, certain students have a greater chance of entering high schools if their parents have higher educations and greater incomes. These students have a better chance of being admitted to universities because their schools will prepare them for the college entrance examinations. In contrast, students from lower-income families tend to choose vocational schools where they will be taught practical skills for future employment. They usually choose not to go to college due to a lack of financial support from their family (Chen, 2001; Hsueh, 2003).

The situation of higher education in Taiwan can be considered an example of how Collin's (1979) argument that the dominant group continues to raise the credential requirements and tells the public that education will lead to social mobility. Left out of the conversation is the implication of racist and classist policies and practices related to equal access and achievement. It is an active process of domination of other social classes.

Bourdieu (1977) defines cultural capital as knowledge, dispositions, skills, and cultural background (opportunities to read great works of literature, visit museums, go to the theater, and attend concerts). These are passed from one generation to the next. Thus, economic capital correlates with one's social class and cultural capital. Students from the upper class inherit different cultural capital than do working-class students. Children from the upper class are prepared to obtain appropriate cultural and linguistic competence in their upbringing and become familiar with the dominant culture, which makes it more likely they will find success in and after school. School education serves as a role to embrace the class

interests and ideologies, and it rewards the dominant cultural capital but devalues the subordinate one.

For example, Lareau (2000) examined the question about who gets ahead in the school system and social reproduction. She studied the connection between homes, parents' occupations, and schools, and how these factors influence children's performance at school. She compared two elementary schools, Prescott and Colton. Prescott consists mostly of upper-middle class students while Colton has mostly working-class students. She found that in both schools, teachers asked for parental involvement at the school. Compared to Colton parents, the Prescott parents effectively connected and were constantly involved in their children's school activities and curriculum—to the point of annoyance, in some cases. The upper-middle-class parents would read and reinforce the curriculum for their kids at home and would intervene in classrooms at school, while the working-class parents trusted the teacher to educate their children. Lareau pointed out that the confidence and cultural capital of each family had to do with parents' involvement in school activities.

Many Colton parents were either high school graduates or dropouts and were intimidated by the teacher's professional skills and insights. They usually deferred to the teachers' expertise and depended on the school to educate their children. Colton parents lacked information about school curriculum and had limited access to their children's content learning. Even the very involved parents could not provide the assessments of their children's strengths or weaknesses in learning, which led to a separation between home and school activities. On the contrary, Prescott parents regarded teachers as social equals and felt comfortable in confronting teachers about their children's problems at school. They understood their roles in school. They would intervene in children's schooling if they were

failing and challenged the school system. Parents also had to know how to activate the resources to transform them into benefits, and this is where upper-class and upper-middle classes learn their cultural capital.

Therefore, social class shaped parents' perspectives about their roles in intervening in their children's educational experience. Social class only provided access to resources. The parents were the ones who activated social resources, then through social practice transformed resources into profits. The parents' performance links to their educational competence, social confidence, social network, information about schooling and roles in children's education, and this influences students' classroom performance. According to Lareau, the social stratification system creates institutional admission requirements and performance standards. Only individuals who meet the requirements get ahead. Students who fail are prevented from reaching elite positions. The upper-middle-class parents understood how to work the system to secure advantages for their children. On the other hand, the working-class parents had no experience or understanding for how the educational system worked. They did not understand how to secure advantages for their children.

Thus, the social division is reproduced when students from underprivileged groups with less access to education information cannot compete with those from the socioeconomic elite (Bourdieu, 1973, 1984). Chen and Cheng (2000) express that children from a higher socioeconomic status receive more educational resources, which could positively affect their education achievement. Access to buxibans is one of the resources in which upper-class parents will invest to acquire advantages for their children. For example, buxibans offer an enriched curriculum in art, content subject areas, and ELE.

Similarly, Lareau (2000) argues that the role of school professionals and teachers is that of “gatekeepers” in the social stratification process. Although Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital has to do with the habitus of students’ family backgrounds, a school is like a marketplace where teachers bring assigned values to students’ cultural capital. School teachers and administrators are key agents who can alter how authorities treat students differently based on social distinctions.

Lin (1999) examined the learning of the English language by students in Hong Kong and demonstrated its impact on their social mobility and economic attainment. She found that the ability to access the English language usually influences the social mobility and economic attainment of students who do not speak English as a first language (L1) or second language (L2). Lin concluded that English is always a language for educational and socioeconomic advancement, and it has become the symbol of the ability to access valuable social resources. Because of the importance of English language courses, a new curriculum was implemented at schools, and parents looked for English language instruction schools in Hong Kong. Thus, it created a misrepresentation of ELE, and parents equated English language instruction schools with good quality schools. In her study, Lin observed four classrooms. Some were in expensive residential areas and others in disadvantaged socioeconomic neighborhoods. She focused on the interaction between teachers and students, especially how teachers used L1 and L2 to help students transform their habitus to gain confidence in English language learning. Lin (1999) claims that if working-class youth gain more access to English language resources, they will have more chances to succeed in their society.

Currently, ELE in Taiwan is undergoing a transformation similar to what took place in Hong Kong. Parents in Taiwan believe that better English language skills equal a better job and maybe even the attainment of a higher social status. In addition to ELE in teaching and learning, it is important to investigate the role of English in Taiwanese society. Is it implicated in the social reproduction and educational attainment of a particular social class? If so, how do English-speaking Taiwanese educators see their English ability and knowledge as a mark of social distinction? According to Bourdieu (1979, 1984), social class is the structure of relations within a specific value of properties, such as social origin, income, educational level, gender, and age, and the effects they utilize on practices. Furthermore, cultural practices, such as reading and museum visits, are linked to the educational level where different cultural practices are taught. These cultural practices create different tastes, which correspond with a social hierarchy as markers of class. One's social class represents one's background that is different from other groups.

Therefore, the English language skills could be utilized as a new marker for Taiwanese people at the upper-class and upper-middle classes in order for them to socially distinguish themselves from others. The phenomenon of learning English as a second language has risen dramatically in Taiwanese society. Furthermore, it is not enough to learn English in our home countries, but it is more valuable to go abroad and learn the language while getting a degree in higher education. For example, many people, including myself, came to the United States, to receive a post-secondary education and to learn English at the same time. The purpose of doing so is to acquire not only higher cultural capital, but as Bourdieu (1979/1984) would state, to acquire *cachet* and to distinguish social status from others.

The concept of cultural capital is brought up often in social reproduction theory because the perpetuation of status is always intertwined with the possession of cultural capital from the dominant group. Seo's (2010) study showed that English language ability has become a part of cultural capital in South Korea. Individuals who obtain English skills are regarded as the elite status, and English performance can generate social and economic profit. Therefore, students will attend a tutoring institute where they can learn English from an advanced instructor. Students' English performance depends on whether they have access to the private tutoring institutes; hence, students' English performance will be likely influenced by their family status, chiefly, by the income of the family.

Similar to the situation in South Korea, learning the English language is important for Taiwanese people in terms of competing in the global economy, but it is problematic in creating or developing this cachet. With the influence of mass media, the importance of the English language is instilled in our minds, but we have not been critical about implementing policies of ELE because it becomes the tool that the dominant/higher class uses to perpetuate social divisions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I explain the methodology I used for my study. This study was conducted as critical qualitative interview research, and critical phenomenology was employed as the methodology. Also, I describe the methods I used for data collection.

Qualitative research data is an inquiry process based on different methodologies that researchers use to explore social and human phenomena. Creswell (1997/2012) argues that a qualitative researcher studies subjects in a particular field and tries to interpret the meaning of a phenomenon that people bring to the research. Qualitative research can reveal how power is distributed in society (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). Critical qualitative research, which I use in this study, strives to integrate theory and practice in a way that individuals and groups become aware of the contradictions and distortions in their beliefs and in social practices. Its method of critiques challenges belief systems and social relations through a critical study of meaning (Schwandt, 1997).

Maxwell (2005) explains that “meaning” includes “cognition, affect, intentions, and anything else that can be encompassed in what qualitative researchers often refer to as the participants’ perspective” (p. 22). The perspective is not only participants’ views of action but is also a part of the reality the researcher is trying to understand. In other words, participants’ representations of the world are a form of action.

Phenomenology is essentially the study of people’s lived experience (Lavery, 2003; Stanford University, 2008). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a phenomenological method enables the understanding of people’s experiences; its emphasis is on the world as lived by people, not the world that separates people from one another. Hales and Watkins (2004) propose that knowledge of the phenomenon can be differently distributed amongst

participants—that is, not every individual has the same meaning of the phenomenon. “What is/was this experience like?” is the purpose of this inquiry. It attempts to reveal the meanings of human experience in everyday existence (Laverty, 2003). Human experience includes thinking, perceiving, and acting, which are connected in certain ways. Laverty argues that the life-world is understood as what we experience reflectively, including those things taken for granted or considered “common sense.”

From the perspective of phenomenology, an individual’s life-world is socially contextualized in such a way that one’s experiences are interrelated meaningfully. Although social context is seen as a fundamental ground where all meanings emerge, a phenomenological approach looks primarily into the relations of things (action, word, event, etc.) and what is taken up in our daily activities. The purpose of this approach is to investigate the perspective of one’s experience instead of observing the social setting from a third-person viewpoint (Ilharco & Introna, 2004; Thompson et al., 1990). This life-world, according to Goulding (2002), is defined as the world in which we, as human beings, experience culture and society, are influenced by them, and take stands on their behalf or act upon them. The study of these experiences is intended to re-examine these taken-for-granted experiences and possibly unfold new and/or forgotten meanings. I use this approach to investigate the social meaning of English language education (ELE) as a *phenomenon*. Does ELE differentiate participants’ social roles from other people? Do their roles as English educators in Taiwan produce certain status needs and desires? These are the types of questions that drive my study.

Willis (2004) claims that phenomenological inquiry is a form of interpretive inquiry that focuses on human perceptions, especially on their particular human experience. He

posits that humans have developed inward life-worlds in which we consciously perceive meaning and acting. Human experience involves an ongoing process of perceiving and then re-perceiving. We reconsider our perceptions as we socially interact with others around the same phenomenon. Therefore, the purpose of phenomenological inquiry is to investigate human perceptions of individuals and how such perceptions appeal to the perception of other people. Such inquiry looks into what life-worlds we do or do not have in common and how they are influenced by the larger context. To interpret one's perception about his/her experience with social life, language is used as the medium to convey meanings between language use and the experience (Goulding, 2004).

Phenomenological inquiry is interpretive, narrative, and hermeneutical. Also, it can be critical (Velmans, 2006). Critical phenomenology is reflexive and allows the researcher to interpret participants' meaning with their personal knowledge and critical (or not so critical) perspectives. When talking about phenomenology, it is necessary to connect it with hermeneutics. Because phenomenology requires meaning making by the researcher, there is the question of how one makes meaning of others. Hermeneutics is the study of how we make meaning, or, of interpretation. Hermeneutics is designed for understanding and interpreting human perceptions (Byrne, 2001; Freeman, 2008). Meaning is found as we construct the world from our backgrounds and experiences at the same time we are constructed by the world. Hermeneutics is an interpretive process that seeks to bring out understandings of phenomena through language (Lavery, 2003). Thus, language plays a central role in hermeneutics because it is the venue for the interpreting process. Language shapes one's thoughts and perceptions of reality. It also can conceal motives and

fundamental beliefs. The individual uses language as a channel for feelings, social behaviors, action, and thoughts. In other words, language is used strategically.

Gadamer's (1999) perspective of traditional hermeneutics is to discover the historicity of understanding. He argues that interpretation is tied to our understanding of history. He suggests that we should be guided by normative history and tradition in order to reveal the common consensus around the meaning of text. Tradition is situated in time and influences us in our development of how we understand texts. When we interpret an object and retext it, we must connect our meaning to interpretive traditions. Language becomes the medium of historical transmission. This means that the concepts and ideas are related to each other through history, and individuals can understand and communicate with the past because of a shared language and an understanding of meaning.

Gadamer (1989) contends that language and understanding are structural aspects of the individual's life in the world. Language is the "universal" medium through which understanding takes place, and understanding occurs in the interpretation of language use, or, communication. When interpreting a text, a traditional hermeneutical approach will isolate the preconceptions of an object, which is determined as the author's intent.

However, according to McCarthy (1981), Habermas argues that a traditional hermeneutical approach fails to take social power into consideration. Interpretation of texts is linked to social power and domination. What we say is based on our motives and status. While Gadamer insists that all interpretation should be constrained by tradition, Habermas contends that critical hermeneutics should be concerned with the hidden meaning within texts. Language is shaped by social factors such as economic status and social class in that it conveys class interests. Language plays a role in social relations and works to reproduce an

unequal social system, which operates through the distortion of reality within texts. The dominant group is the main one that creates the problem of social relations through the construction of ideologies. An individual's ideological status may promote or reject that of the dominant group, depending on which ideology he/she adopts. Habermas uses critical reflection to lead individuals away from taken-for-granted preconceptions toward a more critical interpretation (Kögler, 2008). Critical reflection always ties back to the historical context of unintelligible discourse and makes individuals become aware of social distortions through the unearthing of hidden or repressed meanings (Allen & Leonardo, 2008).

Therefore, critical hermeneutics can be used to look into education, which Gallagher (1992a/1992b) says is reproduced mainly by class. Teachers who have unconsciously or consciously internalized oppressive class, race, and gender ideologies transfer these same discourses to students, or at least, subject students to them. In other words, language and communication are mobilized strategically to ensure the maintenance of power relations. Through the reflection of hermeneutics, teachers can examine their lives and ways where they have been a part of social reproduction through a critical study of the politics of meaning.

The purpose of hermeneutics is to explore the hidden power imbalances in language and to challenge the status quo discursively. This approach can be used for this study to explore the hidden power imbalances of social status by examining Taiwanese English educators' social meaning of ELE. How do they talk about those who learn English readily and those who do not? How do they differentiate their own experience of learning English from those of others? How is their view of the history of Taiwan conveyed through how they depict parents and students from different class backgrounds?

Research Questions

1. How does the discourse of these participants reveal their understanding of social meaning of ELE in Taiwan?
2. How do English-speaking Taiwanese educators position themselves relative to others as they discuss English language education in Taiwan? Do they see their English ability as a mark of social distinction?

Setting and Participant Selection

The data collection for this study occurred from July to December 2011 in a southern county of Taiwan. I chose this site not only because of the convenience of the location (it is where I grew up) but also because diverse schooling environments can be found in this area. By diverse, I mean that typically, an urban area has a greater variety of social problems rooted in economic, language, cultural, and class conflicts. Due to hierarchical political and social arrangements, the educational resources within a county are unequally distributed, even among elementary schools in the same area.

Setting. Some 280,000 people live in this very southern county, which has one city, three urban townships, and 29 rural townships. During Japanese colonization, by following their administrative divisions, urban townships were called towns and rural townships were called villages (Ministry of Justice, 1999). Nowadays, Taiwanese government distinguishes between towns and villages as urban townships and rural townships (Ministry of Interior, 2011). Generally speaking, urban townships have a higher population and more businesses than rural townships.

In this county, the industrial structure focuses mainly on agriculture and fishery. Although the transport facilities have become increasingly convenient for the public and the

industries are incorporated with tourism, according to participants I interviewed, it is considered a rural area.

Participant selection. I used the strategy of purposeful sampling to choose my participants. Maxwell (2005) explains that purposeful sampling is used to select particular settings, people, or activities in order to provide the researcher with information necessary to answer research questions. Based on budget and time constraints, it was not possible to meet with a large number of participants for multiple interviews. Therefore, I limited my participants to elementary English teachers either in private or public schools as opposed to mid-level and upper-level teachers because I have personal contacts with elementary English teachers in this area. I located participants by using a snowball approach. I was able to reach English teachers who had taught me during middle school. They helped me contact graduates who now are teaching English language at primary schools in this rural county where I conducted my study. I also sent an e-mail to the English Teachers' Association regarding my research and asked them to help me locate participants. A member of the association contacted me and helped me contact colleagues who are elementary English teachers.

Originally, I hoped to have a sample that included both those who grew up in working-class families and those who grew up in middle-class families because I am interested in how a different upbringing influences one's views on class and language. When I contacted my English teachers from middle school and the person from the teachers' association, I explained and described my study. After they understood that it related to social class, they looked at the backgrounds of colleagues from a working-class environment,

so I was able to include five of those teachers. The totals are five teachers from working-class backgrounds and ten from middle-class backgrounds.

Social distinction and unequal education usually begin before students start elementary school because English resources are allotted unequally through parental resources to different social classes. These elementary English teachers were students at one time, so they may have gone through a similar or different process of learning English as children. Their reflections are important for considering whether they think about students differently depending on students' English skills *prior* to the start of school.

In Taiwan, English teachers are considered to be part of the middle class (Chen, 2005; Su, 2011; Yao, 2009); they come from different family backgrounds and ethnic groups, which can bring rich data to this study. English teachers work with young children, so it is important to ascertain their personal views about the English language, about English as a status marker, and their position as the ruling class at schools. This study eventually can help English teachers learn to understand how ELE reproduces social class, which could empower them to help students from disadvantaged classes.

Participants backgrounds. I created a chart of participants' backgrounds (Appendix C), but here I provide details about who they are. All participants speak Mandarin and Taiwanese. Most went through the ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE, while a few followed different routes to become English teachers at the elementary level.

Tao is the first English teacher I interviewed; she identified her family status as well off. Her parents own a rice store, which her father inherited from the previous generation. During her schooling experience, her mother paid a lot of attention to her grades and was willing to invest money into *buxiban*. Like many students, she attended *buxibans*, and she

never had problems with any subject. She defined herself as a good student who followed orders at school. She said her parents always wanted her to become a teacher, and she finally did become an English teacher after she participated in the ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE. Tao once taught English in a city school but moved to the county after she got married. She shared stories about lots of English teaching experiences in different schools.

“You look like a kid,” was how Zhang started our conversation. She told me she never thought about whether her family was poor or rich--it seemed complicated to her. She shared little more than that her father worked in a fisherman organization in a city, offering not details about exactly what he did. Her mother is a housewife. Zhang did say that she came from an advantaged group and had a chance to go abroad for further study in the United States for her high school and higher education. She has taken on different kinds of jobs since returning to Taiwan. She once worked as a secretary at a fisherman organization for two years, at the same time she was tutoring English language to children. She found teaching is interesting, so she moved to a bigger city to teach English in a buxiban for another two years. Later, she returned to her hometown and opened her own English buxiban. The business lasted for five years when she saw the news that the MOE was looking for English teachers to teach at the elementary level. She passed the qualification exams and finished the English teacher education program, then applied for a teaching position at her current school.

Li looked very serious and intense when we met the first time. She was worried that she would not give me the correct answers. Li defined her family status as between a working-class and middle-class, but she did not offer details about what her parents did,

saying only that her father was a public servant¹ and mother, a housewife. Her father always told her to study hard and attend a university. She went to the most prestigious high school and university in Taiwan. After graduating from a university English department, she went to the United States for further study about children's education. She was teaching children's education in a vocational school after she returned from the United States. Later, she decided to return to her hometown to teach English at her current school. She went back to the university and to take courses in a TESOL program, then received her certificate.

Wang's father owned a grocery store, which he inherited from his grandfather. Because Wang was young, her father told her that English would become very important in the future, so in third grade, she attended an English buxiban and then went abroad for further study in Australia after graduating from middle school. Although she did not tell me what she majored in at the university, she returned to Taiwan to finish the internship and that she was planning to go back to Australia for a master's degree. However, she ended up getting a part-time job in an English buxiban. After she learned the news about the needs of elementary English teachers in Taiwan, she decided to give a try and take the qualification exam to enter the ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE. After passing the exam, she decided to not go back to Australia for her master's degree but stayed in Taiwan, graduated from the program, and then was certified to teach English at her current school.

Xu's father was an elementary school teacher, and her mother was a housewife. Her mother let her dad handle the responsibility of Xu's schooling. She defined her family as well-off. Her dad forced her and her siblings to study hard or he would punish them for not

¹ Public servants here refer to those who worked for government-owned infrastructure, such as the railways in Taiwan.

getting good grades. She admitted that she had more access to educational resources because of her dad's job. She said she had no issue at schools and that when the MOE was looking for elementary English teachers, she decided to give a try. She went through the whole process without any problem. After she was certified, she taught in several elementary schools in urban and rural areas.

Like Gao, Zhou felt relieved when she saw me: She thought I would look strict, like a researcher. Zhou came from a working-class background, and her parents were farmers with little education. She worked her way through higher education and became an English teacher. She remembered that it was hard to find educational resources in her remote township, but her parents insisted study hard and pushed her to leave her hometown, so she could receive better education. She followed her parent's expectation to become a teacher, majoring in children's education. She taught for a couple of years in an elementary school before she decided going back to school and become certified in TESOL. She later married a man who is an elementary teacher and moved back to her hometown, but she was teaching in another township.

Ma's father was a policeman, but it was a job did that did not provide her a stable life. She told me her family moved often and that she had lived in different rural townships. She considered her family as poor because her dad's salary was so low. She became interested in the English language when her father borrowed English magazines from a friend's house. She enjoyed looking at the colorful pictures and hoped one day she could understand the language. Her dad took some schooling to pass an exam to become a policeman, so he understood the importance of education and pushed Ma to study hard. Her dad wanted her to become a teacher. She majored in English at a university, worked in an English buxiban.

Then like other participants, passed the qualification exam, finished course work in the English teacher education program, and was certified to teach English at her current school.

Hong's parents were farmers who grew fruits, and he considered himself coming from a poor family background. He explained that the life was not easy for his family: His siblings had to help their parents work on the farm. Meanwhile, his parents believed that education was the only way to escape from their poverty. Therefore, he studied hard to pass exams in order to attend schools in big cities. He majored in English after entering a university. As a young man with limited skills other than knowledge of English, Hong said, it was hard to find a job. However, his parents encouraged Hong to find a stable job, such as being a policeman, serving in the military, or teaching, so he chose to become an English teacher. He took the qualification exam, attended the ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE, then applied for a teaching job at his current school.

Ke's parents were public servants, so she defined herself as coming from a well-off family that never had to worry about financial issues. Her father expected her to become a public servant, so she went to a teacher education college and majored in children's psychology. She worked as a school consultant for a while, then she got bored because the students did not need much psychological consulting. She then went back to school and became certified in TESOL. Ke went to schools and worked in cities, and then transferred to her hometown and now works at her current school.

Yu came from a working-class background. Her father worked in a train station, but she considered her family to be poor because her mother was a stay-at-home mom; it was a challenge to live on one income. Besides, she had to take care of her sisters and brothers and therefore never had time and money to attend buxibans. She worked her way through higher

education, she said, and always wanted to become a teacher. The reason she became an English teacher was because she had a higher score on English test of NEE, she said, so she decided to study TESOL.

Lin said she was from a middle-class family. Her father was a public servant and her mother, a housewife. She considered herself coming from a middle-class family because her family gave her more opportunities to gain access to educational resources than did children from a typical farmer's family, for example. She was able to attend two colleges to study a variety of topics; one was teacher education and another was international commerce. She told me that the reason she became a teacher was because her parents wanted her to get a stable job. She later decided to study TESOL in a university near London, and then she returned to hometown to teach at her current school.

Chen's father was a nationalist soldier and wanted Chen to find a stable job. That was when she decided to become a teacher. She had five years of teaching experience in English language buxibans for children. Her parents wanted her to become a teacher because it is a stable job, she said. When the MOE was recruiting English language teachers for the elementary level, she took the qualification exam and entered the teacher education program to get certified as a teacher at her current school. She considered herself coming from a well-off family.

Both of Huang's parents were school teachers in a southern township, but later they moved to a city. As a child of public servants, she considered herself coming from a well-off background. Huang did not appreciate the path that her parents laid out for her, because her parents expected her to become a teacher. Although she was interested in English, she never thought about becoming an English teacher. She tried different majors and attended several

classes at her university. In the end, she realized she did not have any skills but held an interest in English. She eventually took parent's advice to take the qualification exam, entered the ELE program sponsored by the MOE, and after she finished the internship, she found a job opening in a northern city, so she applied for it. Later, she got married, moved back to her hometown and taught in her current school.

Xie was born in a big city two hours away from his grandparent's house. His parents moved to the township in order to take care of the grandparents. His parents worked at hotel restaurant and later opened their own restaurant. He was from a well-off background. Xie did not like living in a rural township at first, because it was hard for him to access to educational resources. After entering high school, he was admitted into an English gifted class and gained wide exposure to the English language. He decided to study in the TESOL program and became an English teacher to meet his parents' expectation. His parents wanted him to get a teaching job because it would be a stable job compared to working in a restaurant.

Gao gave me a big smile when I walked into the room, saying I looked younger than I sounded on the phone and that she felt relieved because I looked friendly. She told me she came from a middle-class family; both of her parents were public servants and worked in a big city. Her mother was always in charge of the children's education. She hardly questioned the reasons her mother wanted her to go to buxibans and to become an English teacher. She entered the top high school in her hometown and passed the NEE. Her scores were high enough to be admitted to the teacher education program in a university English department. After graduating from the university, she found a teaching job at her current

school. She said she was a well-protected city girl who was never exposed to rural areas until she started to teach at current school--and that was a culture shock.

Data Collection

Initially, I was planning to do interviews and classroom observations, but gaining access to the school classroom was difficult. Due to the time and financial constraints, I decided to conduct the interviews. According to Seidman (2006), an interview is a method that gives participants an opportunity to share their stories, their background, and their experiences with social and educational issues. Because my study examined a phenomenon of ELE in Taiwan, I used interviews to understand participants' experiences with this phenomenon. To collect rich data, I followed Creswell's (2013) strategy of triangulation, in which researchers use multiple sources to provide and substantiate evidence. Therefore, I incorporated official documents and journal accounts in this study to help me triangulate the data and find themes.

Interviews. I conducted three interviews with each participant. I used probing questions to delve into English educators' perspectives about their social class backgrounds and that of their students, as well as their experience with ELE. The most common form of interview I used was the person-to-person in-depth interview, where one person elicits information from another through dialogues. One reason I used a qualitative interview method was because there is limited access to Taiwanese classrooms.

The interviews were semi-structured in that this type of interview was flexibly worded, and the interview was a mix of less structured and more formal questions (see Appendices). In this study, social class, social and cultural influence, and ELE experience are factors that influence participants' perceptions. To interpret their meaning-making of

social class and ELE in Taiwan, participants were asked to reflect upon their experiences as students of English as well as on their experiences as English teachers. Although I proposed initial questions, I left the space open to participants to generate a dialogue. A hermeneutical approach is based on the texts of participants' stories, so characteristics of participants' experience and meaning-making usually emerge from interview dialogues (Thompson, 1997). During interviews, participants shared their experience of ELE and meaning-making of it as a status marker.

According to Seidman (1998), to understand people's meaningful behaviors, we must put them into the context of where they live. The first interview was built into the context of Taiwanese English educators' English language learning experiences as students in Taiwanese institutions (see Appendix A). The second interview concentrated on the details of the participants' current experiences as an English language teacher (see Appendix B). The third interview was a focus group discussing English language education, and the questions were based on data from the first two interviews. The purpose of a focus group is to better understand what participants believe as well as why they behave in the way they do (Casey & Krueger, 2009). Since my participants came from the dominant group, sharing similar lived experience (such as family backgrounds and educational experience), I believed they would share more (or partial) openly their mainstream ideology about language and education in a homogenous group. I divided the 15 participants into three sub-groups based on scheduling convenience to give everyone an opportunity to participate in the dialogue. Each individual interview took between 60-90 minutes; the focus group was longer, about one and a half hours to two hours.

Official documents. I collected information from the English language policies from the MOE website. According to Merriam (2001), public records such as institutional documentation can provide valuable information regarding the style of education used in the classroom setting. They also can be helpful for generating interview questions. Thus, the rationale for asking for institutional documents is similar to that of observation techniques. Different schools have different language requirements for English teachers. Language policies involve politics and policy formulations, so they tell us something about those who created them as well as those who have to deal with them.

Journals. The use of journal writing has become an effective technique that allows participants to express deeply embedded beliefs, especially when the interview questions may be sensitive to discuss face to face. The topics for journal entries reflected upon the research questions: (a) How does speaking English benefit you? (b) Why is it that some people do not learn English (or do not learn it well)? (c) What role do schools have in supporting English language education? Participants were asked to maintain a journal, which provided them an opportunity to reflect on the questions prior to our meeting. Participants asked me to e-mail them all three questions at once, so they had time to think about them; most of them turned in their journals by e-mail or hard copies. By maintaining journals, participants had the chance to thoughtfully reflect on the questions as they engaged in journal writing. This provided a platform for participants to elaborate about their answers to the interview questions and to reflect on issues that may come up from our dialogues, particularly in the focus group. In the end, I received journals from 14 participants, and although they were not lengthy, they provided useful information, which helped me establish themes for this study.

Researcher's memos. According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), producing in-process memos helps the researcher to identify and develop interpretations, questions, or themes from the data collected. So, I write analytic memos and weekly reflections throughout the research process. Also, sometimes it is hard for a researcher to avoid a bias as the dialogues with participants take place. Keeping reflective journals allows me, as the researcher, to reflect upon how I experience these interviews. For example, I reflected on the things that happen within the interview environment. These reflections led to my own meaning-making about the interviews.

Positions of the Researcher

According to Maxwell (2005), the researcher is an instrument in qualitative studies. The relationships that a researcher creates with participants can facilitate participant selection and data collection. Researchers as well as participants will bring their social identities and ideologies into the interview relationship, and this affects the substance and equity of interviews. Researchers' and participants' social beings are influenced by their experience with issues of class, race, ethnicity, and gender as they relate to their lives.

My roles as a researcher are both as an insider and as an outsider. I am an insider because I am a native Taiwanese who knows the culture and people well. Without a language barrier, I can gain my participants' trust sooner and be immersed readily into Taiwanese educational and cultural contexts. Like middle-class participants, I share a similar background with them. I also am a product of a middle-class upbringing and bought into the achievement ideology. Although both parents also are working class, they learned how to work with educational system--so they too bought into the achievement ideology, even they did not believe in "everyone starts at the same starting line." They understood that education

is the only way to climb the status ladder. While they were busy working and providing for their family, they paid attention to other middle-class parents to invest in their children's education. That is why I attended English buxiban as a third-grader, even though I did not like it at all. I could not pronounce English like the instructor asked me to. I constantly erred in my grammar lessons. To me, the English buxiban was like a day care center. Like with other families, my parents were busy working, so they needed someone to watch after me, like a babysitter. I once asked my mother the reason of sending me to learn English. She replied that learning English would help me in English class after entering middle school. Just like she said, I only had few problems doing my English homework and passing English tests through middle school and high school, and because I received a high score on the English test on the NEE, I was admitted to a university. To learn more English-speaking skills, I sought an opportunity to study abroad in the United States.

However, I am an outsider because I left Taiwan soon after the new educational system started and am familiar only with the former educational system. Furthermore, I am a doctoral student in the American educational system. As an English learner, I understand how important it is to learn the English language, as I found out when I came to the United States. But, not everyone can have the same opportunities I have to learn the English language and pursue a higher education abroad. My participants might see me as an elitist who is studying in the United States and earning a doctorate degree in contrast to participants who may see themselves as “just” English teachers at the elementary school level. Additionally, my study looks into ELE as a status marker, which is not part of the mainstream discourse. The mass media has conveyed the unquestioned importance of the relationship between the global economy and English language learning, which has led to the

current normative trend of learning English in Taiwan. Thus, my participants might see me as a traitor who is against ELE and the notion of “progress” in Taiwan--if I reveal my position on ELE.

Glesne (2006) says that in traditional qualitative research the researcher is expected to be friendly and empathetic but should remain neutral and uninvolved. However, I hesitate to describe my study as “traditional” research study because I believe all researchers take their own ideological perspectives and biases with them into the research process as soon as they decide what they want to study, why they want to know a particular phenomenon, and how to design the study. Research is not neutral. The researcher has a set of entrenched their social values and ideologies that manifests itself into the study, yet, our social values and ideologies may be challenged or affirmed through the process of the research when we acquire new knowledge. As a researcher myself, I never looked into what I believe and never identified myself as a middle-class. When I went to high school and the university in big cities, people I encountered often called me “a fishman’s kid” or a kid from a rural township. It was not until I went to conferences and met educators from Taiwan that I was told I would be one of “*them*.” I was identified with the elite, because of my skills in English. Since when did one’s English ability become a label? With questions in my mind, I decided to conduct this study and to help myself understand English teachers’ discourse about relationships between social reproduction, achievement ideology, and ELE--which I bought into to maintain my social status.

The concerns I cited above appeared when I first contacted teachers by phone. Before I called these potential participants, they had been informed about my study. However, they seemed guarded and nervous when I talked to them on the phone because they saw me as an

elitist who was receiving her higher education in the United States, and they told me they did not know what to share with me.

A couple of teachers asked, “Are we going to use English during interviews; can we speak in Mandarin?” They told me they felt more comfortable speaking in Mandarin. In the first meeting with each participant, they put their guard down after they learned that I share a similar background with many of them. They seemed to feel comfortable talking about their status, experience of schooling, and critiques about teaching ELE in rural areas. Meanwhile, I was asked about my reasons for studying ELE as a mark of social distinction, which made my roles of an insider and an outsider challenging throughout the interview process.

Member Checking and Confidentiality

Before starting the interviews, I called and explained to participants the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection, including interviews, journal writings and a focus group, and the approximate time required to participate. I verbally explained the informed consent form in Mandarin. When we met for the first interview, I handed the consent form to participants and again reviewed the content before they signed. Meanwhile, I explained that all documents and notes would be confidential and would be seen only by me and my committee members. Any characteristics that could identify the schools and teachers were removed and replaced with pseudonyms to protect their privacy and identities. All documents were stored in a locked cabinet.

When I met with the group for the focus- group discussion, and because I communicated with participants in Mandarin, Taiwanese, and some English, I double-checked with the participants for word choices in the transcripts to make sure I translated correctly.

Data Analysis

In relation to the study of English language education in Taiwan, I want to understand how English language learning discourse reveals social relations of class domination. As Porter & Robinson (2011) notes, language often legitimizes existing social relations and therefore must be engaged critically. My belief is that ELE in Taiwan creates a schism between those with greater privilege who have access to English resources and those who do not (mostly working class), thus drawing social boundaries. The purpose of this study is to identify elementary English teachers' experiences and explanations about ELE as a mark of social distinction.

After the tape-recorded interview sessions were transcribed and translated from Mandarin/Taiwanese to English, I analyzed data by using inductive and deductive techniques. Researchers can use inductive techniques to look for patterns or themes that were brought up frequently by participants, then put them in categories. The deductive process allows researchers to use study questions as guidelines to create categories for patterns. There are two central research questions for this study: (a) How does the discourse of these participants reveal their understanding of social meaning of ELE in Taiwan? (b) How do English speaking Taiwanese educators position themselves relative to others as they discuss English language education in Taiwan? Do they see their English ability as a mark of social distinction? My study is about whether ELE becomes a mark of social distinction in Taiwan, so I search for discourse that either overtly or covertly draws social boundaries and reinforces ELE as a mark of social distinction.

I used the hermeneutical method to code and analyze data from the interviews and journals. Prior to collecting data, I predicted themes that I hoped would emerge. I first jotted

down themes based on my personal experience and knowledge about ELE and on correspondence with Taiwanese teachers and professors. I considered that the trend of English learning had become a phenomenon and that English proficiency tests had become a new gatekeeper in Taiwan's schooling system. Individuals I encountered were often arrogant about their English ability. However, these observations about ELE did not exist without reason. The phenomenon was related directly to Taiwan's education system as a whole, including the participants who play a part in the system. After reviewing my research questions, I initially considered the following themes:

- Internationalization/educational system reforms.
- Infatuation of the English language.
- CLT does not work.
- Attitude/Arrogance of English speakers in this study.

I predicted the participants would agree with the first three themes based on their experience working in the Taiwanese educational system. The arrogant behavior, however, represented participants' own attitude based on their English ability in school and society.

With these themes in mind, I also inductively coded my data by reading transcriptions of my interviews and of the participants' journals. I arranged my transcriptions by interview questions, in order to get the general idea about participants' backgrounds including English learning and teaching experience. When I first read the transcriptions, I looked into words that were mentioned repeatedly in the data, and wrote these words in the margins of the transcriptions. I was interested in how the participants perceived the phenomenon of ELE; specifically how they viewed the relationship between their social status and English ability. In order to answer research questions for my study, I reviewed and interpreted the data based

on what I had heard and experienced; thus, I read the data interpretively and reflexively. During the process, I wrote the research questions on two large pieces of paper and categorized themes under each question carefully color coding each theme. Once again, I looked at the data to find then interpret participants' statements that appeared to answer the research questions.

I used I coded the data and organized into categories recurring patterns and statements from interviews and journal writings. These categories are (a) ELE stratification at the elementary school level, (b) attitudes toward ELE, (c) critiques on American Education, (d) a mark of distinction. In the next chapter, I explain the interview data, and there may be grammatical variations found in the statements. Although I translated from Mandarin and/or Taiwanese to English, I hope to keep participants' original meanings because this study and findings speak for them.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether English language education (ELE) is a mark of social distinction in Taiwan. All data were collected in Taiwan. The data encompassed transcripts of two individual interviews of 15 participants and one focus group, plus journal writings, and I also looked into ELE policy on the MOE website to incorporate with participants' comments. During individual interviews, participants were asked to describe their family social status, English language learning experience, and issues they encountered while teaching in a rural county. Prior to the interviews, I was concerned whether participants would be willing to share information about their personal backgrounds and learning experience of ELE. When the first interview was initiated, participants were free to talk about their social status, the role of ELE, and the imbalanced distribution of ELE resources between rural areas and urban areas.

The participants in this study were current English language teachers at the elementary level in Taiwan. Although they were middle-class themselves currently, they were born into either working-class or middle-class families. These English language teachers were chosen purposely to examine their social status and their English language learning experience as it relates to different social and educational issues. If they are able to recognize the privilege inherent in their profession, they may be able to use their power to make changes to help students in rural areas.

Findings revealed that each participant's background and experience as English language teachers differed, but commonalities emerged within the group. These themes are reported and are discussed in this chapter. Quotations from two interviews, one focus group, journal writings, and English language policy at the MOE website were used to illustrate the

findings. All identifying information related to the participants has been changed to ensure confidentiality; pseudonyms have been used to identify the teachers.

I have divided the data categories into three sections: (a) ELE stratification at the elementary level, (b) social mobility as it relates to ELE and credentials, and (c) attitudes toward ELE. The first section focuses on English language teachers who work at different schools in both urban and rural areas and incorporated various strategies into their teaching, including English language policy and ELE resources. Participants experienced big differences between teaching in urban schools versus small town schools, particularly with the availability of resources. During the interviews, participants expressed their thoughts regarding various teaching experiences in different schools and revealed issues they encountered in their current schools. They also shared their thoughts about the phenomenon of English language learning in Taiwan. In this section, participants looked at ELE from angles of ELE policy, distribution of ELE resources, and the unique buxiban (cram school) culture in Taiwan. I created a chart of participants' backgrounds, their school locations, and grade levels they taught during the process of interview (please see Appendix C).

English language learning became more popular after the educational system reforms of 2000. During the past 10 years, English language teachers have experienced new language policies, different curricula, and new teaching techniques. The second section of this study deals with participants' comments on the roles that obtaining English language skills play in Taiwan. To enhance economic competitiveness, the Taiwanese government needs for its citizens to learn the English language in order to expand island the nation's economy in international markets.

These English language teachers described the role the English language plays in Taiwanese society. Participants expressed their views on how education plays a role in social mobility. All participants agreed that professional credentials play a key role in determining an individual's status and job attainment in Taiwan. They shared their experiences and reasons why they become teachers. The third and final section focuses on these participants' attitudes toward the English language in Taiwanese society. English language teachers shared their interactions with school colleagues and parents and talked about how other people view them as English language teachers in rural areas.

ELE Stratification at the Elementary School Level

The purpose of implementing ELE policy at the elementary school level is not only to foster economic internationalization but also to eliminate the buxiban culture. ELE originally starts in middle schools, and many students are sent to English language buxibans to learn English before they enter middle school. Children from working-class or lower-class families usually do not have the opportunity to attend English language classes in buxibans. However, English language teachers in Taiwan's middle schools often assume that students already have learned basic English, such as the alphabet, pronunciation, and sentence structure, and therefore these teachers do not go into detail about the fundamental skills but start directly with more advanced lessons. Therefore, those children who have not attended buxibans usually fall behind and lose interest in learning English.

Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) hoped to start English language learning at the regular elementary level so that students living in rural areas did not have to spend extra money to attend a buxiban. The MOE also hoped to close the learning/achievement gap between students in urban areas and rural areas, and to spread educational resources

equitably. Ten years after ELE was implemented at the elementary level, problems still arise. Because the students' English levels are so different, teachers have difficulty preparing academically aligned curricula. The MOE decided to start ELE at the fifth grade, but each county and city had a different understanding regarding ELE implementation. According to participants, urban schools began ELE in either third grade or first grade, but rural schools introduced ELE at either fifth grade or third grade. Another problem is that because most of the ELE teachers live and work in urban areas, students in those areas have a greater opportunity to receive English language education than do students in rural areas. Traveling the distance between the rural and urban areas proved to be a barrier to obtaining ELE. In this section, participants revealed issues they have encountered and delivered critiques about the language policy.

English language policy. Fifteen participants worked in eight different schools within the same county. Only two school are located in a big city, and the rest are in rural or urban townships. Rural townships are less populated and engage in less commerce. They are more agricultural and rely on an agrarian economy. In contrast, urban townships have a larger population that supports more commercial industries, such as restaurants and movie theaters. According to participants, schools still focus on test scores, as they did 10 years ago, because parents want to see scores and teachers must have something to show them. Test scores are used as indicators of how hard students have studied. The ELE policy requires teachers to teach speaking and conversational skills. For example, Zhou said:

The policy wants us to teach English and wants kids to happily learn English, but parents want to see grades, so we have kids to memorize vocabulary, some grammar,

which makes some kids stressful! So I think we didn't change at all after the educational system reformed. Parents and schools are still looking into grades. In her comment, she feels frustrated because students with different English ability levels come to her class. Some already have learned basic English, but others do not even know the English alphabet. She is responsible for those students who have yet to learn basic English and also must think of activities for those with more advanced English language skills. She explained that the state mandate requires English language teachers to cover lessons such as phonics, know 1,200 vocabulary words for third graders, grammar sentence structures, and conversation, but teachers usually are not able to cover the scope of this curriculum because there are only two English language classes per week. In addition, creating an English-only learning environment is difficult because teachers do not use English in their daily life. Adding to the complexity of the task, students with higher levels of English ability may be able to interact with teachers in English, but those with no English language background do not understand anything in English.

Assessment usually falls to simply giving quizzes to students because parents prefer to see grades. "I guess this is why we do not speak English well because teachers will only focus on how to help students to get good grades. All we learn is techniques to get good grades, how fast can students make progress on grades," Zhou said with a sigh. She shrugged her shoulders and concluded:

It actually takes a lot of time and money to study like pronunciation, reading, and listening, in the end speaking practice. But what the English language policy represents is superficial to make people buy into the importance of English language.

But they measure your skills just by test scores? That means nothing because I can get high scores in English tests doesn't mean I can acquire English speaking fluency.

Lin addressed the same issue regarding ELE in her school, especially speaking skills.

She said:

Well, we don't really focus on the speaking part although the MOE policy says so.

Not many students have chances to learn English at earlier ages. I have a lot of kids struggling in my class, just to pass the exam. I have doubt that pushing English down to elementary level is right. Like us, we don't learn English until middle school back then. My English is not worse than those who started to learn at kindergarten.

First, unlike in Hong Kong and Malaysia where English is spoken regularly, in Taiwan, the Taiwanese speak English only in class or for a specific purpose. Therefore, the outcome of the ELE initiatives is limited. Second, schools still administer written tests to children because parents want to see scores. Thus, English language teachers usually omit instruction involving oral communication. Xu shared the same perspective as Lin. She said the English language is regarded as a subject at school, not as a language we use daily.

Another participant, Xie, thought ELE at the elementary level is like an add-on.

"There are only two classes per week for students to learn, and our educational system is still focusing on grades," he said. He did not think students understand the reasons for learning the English language and therefore want only to pass the class. He remarked that the MOE does not have a complete curriculum guidelines for English language teachers.

According to Wang and Lin (2004), before the decision makers reformed MOE's elitism, the MOE owned its centralized state power and all curricula were standardized.

After the reforms, power was decentralized to local governments. The original purpose for

the decentralization of power was to give local entities more control, but this became more populist and politicized because the local governors and parents intervened in the public ownership of education. The curriculum also became pluralistic and afforded school teachers the freedom to choose any curricula that suited students, and this sometimes caused extreme competition among book publishers, teachers, and parents, who vied for the best options for their children. Huang shared her experience about following an English language policy and teaching materials:

The policy is changing all the time. Like this semester, we will focus on reading. Students spend 10 minutes to read each morning. Last year, we were just working on vocabulary, and I am hoping to continue doing the same for this semester. Materials are changing every year, and it depends on which publisher has more interesting books to make teachers more convenient to teach, for example, posters as visual aids. I used to draw by myself. This year a publisher provides me some visual aids, which saves me a lot of time to prepare lessons. Sometimes it's frustrating to follow some policies since we don't have the environment to do it, and the money to spend, such as taking students to English summer camps and English speech competitions, purchasing the digital white board. I mean . . . hmm . . . technology equipment is expensive, but it really helps teachers on interacting with students in English language class. I usually try to follow the policy but barely make it if the school principal does not have the funding.

Li was not hesitant to express her own feelings about the new educational system. In her opinion, Taiwan thought it best to follow the educational models of the United States. The local bureaus, however, overpower the central MOE. The local bureaus do not follow

the MOE's main rules and guidelines; thus, the policies frequently are changed when issues arise. Li said that stronger educational decision makers are needed. These decision makers must take into consideration the skills of students of lower socioeconomic status before instituting a new core curriculum. Li believes that implementing ELE at the elementary school level is a good idea, but that the decision makers did not research the efficacy of such a sweeping change. Instead, these decision makers implemented the policy because they wanted to accommodate public opinion and follow the example of other countries. In the end, ELE at the elementary school level was overshadowed by the high-stakes educational system.

Zhou described the many political issues that have resulted from the implementation of the ELE policy. Many organizations and individuals want a piece of the ELE policy for their own monetary gain, including publishers, and scholars. Zhou prefers to use a certain curriculum, which she thinks suits students' English language ability levels. However, school administrators have different preferences and have insisted that she use the curriculum they have chosen. Teachers and students are the last to be considered when new language and curriculum policies are instituted. Regardless of a teacher's preference or continuity of educational practices, the choice is left to the administrative decision makers.

After the educational system was reformed, the opinions of local politicians and parents became more important. School principals and administrators care more about public opinion than teachers' ideas regarding activities for English language lessons. Zhou said that school administrators should network with parents and politicians to secure funding, but school administrators dare not displease the people in power for fear of losing financial support. However, English language teachers work closely with students, so they know what students need for ELE. Zhou shook her head and said that teachers do not have the power to

secure funding. Because they must rely on school administrators, teachers usually end up compromising their professional judgment and the preferences reflected in public opinion.

Participants pointed out that local politicians sometimes use education for their political platforms, and then when the ruling party is replaced, the policy is also altered. For example, Xu stated:

I don't like politicians who are involved in education policy because they only make the social hierarchy more obvious. Look what we are doing right now. We are expanding the gap between urban and rural areas. I have taught in big cities. I know how much our kids are falling behind in this rural area. Yet, within this area, only those middle-class kids go further, but only a few, three or four out of 30 students in my class.

During my interviews, participants mentioned issues not only of ELE at the elementary level but they talked about central issues that resulted from the bigger picture: the new educational system. When I interviewed participants and asked them what they thought about ELE in rural areas, they first said that the educational system has remained essentially the same for the past 10 years, except it is now more complicated. ELE currently begins at a younger age, in the third grade, but the lack of English language assessment means that teachers do not establish quizzes and exams for midterms and finals. Indeed, when I went through the MOE policy regarding ELE, I did not find sections on English language assessment for students at elementary schools.

Furthermore, the government turned over the leadership to local school principals (administrators). Teachers have the autonomy to develop curricula and lesson plans by themselves, and parents may participate in educational subjects discussed at school (Chen &

Yu, 2011). On the surface, it looks like the MOE has decentralized power to the local level and wants local governments to apply the policy based on local people's needs. However, on closer scrutiny, questions remain: Who gets the power? Who has the autonomy to select the curriculum? Who benefits from the new educational system?

According to the English language teachers I interviewed, some have to communicate with school principals regarding textbook selection. Xu was frustrated that she must switch her current curriculum to another publisher based on her school principal's request.

Although she would prefer the original text and wants to help students save money, she has to go with what the decision makers have demanded. Chen and Yu (2011) explain that when three different groups of people—principals, teachers, parents—share power, it becomes a seesaw battle because each group comes from different political and educational backgrounds and they want different benefits and expect diverse outcomes. The school is viewed as a political entity in which school principals may govern the teachers' decisions on curricula, and teachers' methodology can be suppressed by parents' intervention in the classroom.

The gap between rural and urban regarding ELE resources. Xu also mentioned that participants are well aware of the huge gap in available ELE resources allocated to rural and urban settings. These English language teachers have had different teaching experiences in both urban and rural areas. All but one participant were born in the same county, but they attended different schools and taught in different cities. They ultimately returned to this rural county (the research area) to teach because it had a shortage of English language teachers. In this section, I present their descriptions of what they have experienced teaching English in their schools.

Xu taught English at an elementary school in a city with millions of people before she came back to teach in this rural county (the research area). She said that students in big cities already had learned English at buxibans, so they were confident and interactive. She also had more access to resources, such as textbooks and storybooks. In addition, the local government would hold professional development workshops in the summer to help English language teachers learn new instructional techniques. In contrast, students in her current school rarely go to buxibans, and they show less confidence in their mastery of English. In addition, she has less freedom to choose curricula she would prefer to use in her English classes. She gave me a sarcastic smile and said, “My friend and I usually laugh that we are still working in a provincial society. I mean, we do not have the power to pick curricula we want to use.” She lowered her voice and looked around nervously when she said that, even though we were talking in a private office with nobody else around.

Similarly, another participant, Hong, thought that many governors, educators, and decision makers are living in big cities, so the policies they impose are beneficial for people living in big cities because it is much easier to gain access to better resources. There is always a limited resource pool in the rural areas, and teachers must compete for resources. He said a social hierarchy also exists within this particular rural town. According to Hong, Only parents from the higher classes know where to find resources. Parents from disadvantaged groups have to work all day, know nothing about education, and they do not use the English language.

Actually, Huang and Xie had personal experiences regarding the gap between rural and urban settings. Huang was born in a small town, then moved to a city and entered a middle school there. Schools in the city were much more advanced than those in her small

hometown, Huang said. Students in the city learned faster and were given more academic options than those in the rural town. Therefore, she became a “problem student” who could not catch up with her classmates and regularly received lower test scores. She realized that education in the city was quite different than in the rural area. Now, she has returned to her hometown as an English language teacher, and the gap between urban and rural areas remains significant. Huang used to teach the English language in a big city school that provided electronic equipment and a conversation room to build English-speaking skills.

When she transferred to her current teaching job in a rural town, she found less equipment. People there rarely used technology, such as the electronic whiteboard. She also could not find a room for the English conversation class. The only thing she could do was apply for funding to provide extracurricular activities for students, who are falling behind in English language classes. These students stay after school and receive additional practice in basic English with one of the teachers. They also have the opportunity to finish their homework. Huang is currently seeking more support, including a conversation room and better technology for ELE. However, she believes the existing gap between cities and towns will never close. In our focus group discussion, she shook her head and said the local government in a big city has plans to give each student an iPad so students do not have to carry heavy books to the school every day. She continued, “Look at us, in a rural town. We hardly get an English conversation room.”

Xie had a similar experience. He moved to a town after graduating from a primary school in a city near central Taiwan. He did not fit into the community or the school because the town was remote, very different from life in the city. Gaining access to English language resources was inconvenient. Xie found that he had to rely on the teachers to find books for

him because there was no library in the town. Also, he could not find books he wanted in a local bookstore. After he was certified as an English language teacher, he decided to return to the town in which he grew up. When our focus group discussed the resource gap between cities and towns, he told me that schools in the capital city had already added one more English class at the elementary level, so students now have English language class three times a week. However, Xie's school still maintains a two-hour English language weekly schedule:

I think we need to extend the teaching hours for students to learn English. Also create a speaking environment. We need to separate four skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Right now, we squeeze everything together, I mean, in one class. We need to provide pronunciation, vocabulary, stories, songs, reading. We can't cover everything in two classes a week. However, the reality does not allow us to extend teaching hours. The only thing we can do is to follow our lesson plans. I don't have high expectation for students since they don't learn much, as long as they meet the requirement I give them.

In addition, he said no teacher wants to come and teach in rural areas because of the disparity in resources, instructional freedom, and community support. More and more of his students are applying for welfare each year, he said, and only a couple of students from a higher socioeconomic status are able to receive extra help from English language buxibans. He is worried that the resource gap between cities and towns is expanding beyond recovery.

Another participant, Zhang, said the socio-educational gap between the rich and the poor has always existed and that issues between the urban and rural areas are always related to the dynamics of family wealth. People who live in cities usually receive a better education,

have stable jobs, and receive higher pay, while those living in rural areas do not have the same opportunities and thus remain at the bottom of the socioeconomic stratification.

Because the wealthy remain at the top of the social hierarchy, the linear sequence of privilege, their children consistently have greater access to advanced opportunities and resources, such as English language buxibans. Unfortunately, even if parents living in rural areas know the various political and educational issues, they are unable to generate any significant change because they simply do not have the money to pay for their children to attend English language buxibans.

It seems the gap exists not only between cities and towns, but within a town as well. People of higher social and financial status create this distance, regardless of the area in which they live. English language buxibans seem to play an important role during the process of learning English in Taiwan. “A balance of rural and urban education resources” is always an agenda in the Taiwanese educational system (MOE, 2007b). During one focus group discussion, I asked teachers whether students in this rural area have had more opportunities to learn the English language after the English language policy was reformed 10 years ago. Zhang said:

Education reform does change something here. Ten years ago, we did not teach English in elementary school, but it (English) becomes more universal for all students. Kids could only learn English language at buxibans. Now we bring it to regular schools. Although we cannot narrow down the gap with urban schools, at least we are doing something to help kids learn English.

Xie explained further that students today have more chances to learn English. However, resources available for education are concentrated in cities and counties located near the cities, and the situation is actually broadening the distance between cities and townships.

The research area is located in southern Taiwan, so participants said education resources always arrive late or sometimes never. For example, English Village was built two years after students already were practicing the English language in northern Taiwan. Yet, English summer camps are always held in cities, far from these townships, so students seldom have opportunities to participate. Chen and Cheng (2000) state that it would be easier to secure educational resources if the school were highly urbanized, the learning environment and equipment were better, more curricula choices were offered, and teachers were more willing to stay in urban areas. All participants claimed that there are shortages of both educational resources and teachers in the research field. Chen said:

Schools in rural areas can't find teachers to stay longer in the same school because they all think students' attitudes toward learning English are not good because students know nothing about English compared to kids in the city. They prefer going back to bigger cities to teach instead of staying in rural schools. Like people in northern cities, they receive a lot of information, such as learning English. There are tons of resources to use, like activities, trainings, also many foreigners to practice speaking English.

Chen explained that students do not learn the English language well, not because they do not like it but because they own limited resources. They do not go to buxibans to learn English prior to elementary school, and, if English teachers stay for only a year, they have to adjust to a new teacher's lessons. Based on participants' comments, the new language policy from the

MOE is putting pressure on parents and creating a unique phenomenon, that is, the elementary students' English language ability is built by the buxiban culture and their parents' socioeconomic status in Taiwan.

Based on a comparison of students' test scores, the ELE in urban and rural areas is not at the same level. Social stratification partly determines one's educational attainment as well as the distribution of education resources. Upper middle-class parents live in urbanized areas and earn more money, and they know where to gather resources, so they have more cultural capital to pass down to their children. But working-class parents living in rural areas do not have such access to educational resources, and this makes a difference in students' test results in urban versus rural areas. Even each city and county shares the same English language policy in Taiwan, the local government has different standards for ELE depending on funding and resources. Urban schools have more resources and teachers, so they can teach more classes than rural schools. At this moment, urban elementary schools teach three classes a week, which rural schools are not able to (Chen & Liu, 2008; Qian, 2012).

Buxiban culture. Participants' experience with English language buxibans is discussed in this section. Buxibans originally were private academic seminars during the Japanese colonization from 1895 to 1945. Today, buxibans offer a smaller class setting for the preparation of the National Entrance Exam and enriched extracurricular study. Different types of buxibans allow for specialized study in areas such as piano, art, foreign languages, preparation for language proficiency tests, and other school subjects (Information Management System, 2004). As I mentioned in the section of researcher's role in Chapter 3, I attended different buxibans that focused on lessons other than English. Like many participants I interviewed, I attended painting, piano, and mathematics buxibans. The

purpose of attending math and English buxibans was to help me on school homework, but the reason for attending painting and piano was because both of my parents were busy working and therefore needed a place to have someone watch their children.

When I interviewed participants regarding English language buxibans, most English language teachers held both positive and negative attitudes. On the positive side, they said buxibans serve students who are falling behind in their English language class or are slower learners. By attending buxibans, they can take extra time to learn, and students usually progress. Also, students have supplemental time to learn English because the regular schools offer only two classes a week. English language help buxibans offer more reading, drills, activities, and practice, which provide students with more opportunities to learn. However, Yu said:

Well, students' English scores are either the highest or the lowest in my class. Those who go to buxibans do better. If they have more money, they can go from kindergarten through high school, but not many students are allowed to do that.

She continued by saying that rich people always have more money available to them than the poor. Working-class or lower-class parents do not earn as much money, but sometimes they save so that their children can attend English language buxibans, and setting aside money for the buxibans is not easy. According to Yu, the great gap in English scores means that students usually receive higher scores on English language tests if they attend English language buxibans. Those who do not attend buxibans often receive lower grades.

Zhou said it is easy for her to determine students' socioeconomic backgrounds by looking at their English language ability. She said that students who are good with the English language have already learned it in a bilingual program or buxibans in kindergarten,

and bilingual programs are pricey. For other students who know nothing about English, this means they did not have an opportunity to attend buxibans because their parents could not afford the fees, so these students must rely on public school education to learn English. Xie's comments were similar to Zhou's. He stated that ELE at the elementary school level is offered for two hours a week, and students actually do not learn much in such little time. Taiwanese parents believe that the more money they spend, the better education their children will receive. This has led to the boom in buxibans where parents in rural areas who can afford to invest money in an English language buxiban will send their children there because they hate to see their children fall behind those in larger cities.

When asked about issues they encounter with English language buxibans, the participants usually sighed and gave me a "don't know how to explain" or "feel helpless" facial expression. For example, Chen was an English language instructor in a buxiban before being certified as a school English language teacher. She told me that many students start to learn English language between the ages of 3 and 5. They are enrolled in either bilingual or whole-language English programs. By the time they enter elementary school, these children have learned content subjects in English at the elementary school level. Most students in her classes, however, had never learned English. This has created problems in lesson planning and classroom management. Chen must teach those students who know nothing about English from the beginning, starting with the alphabet and phonics. The students who already had learned English were bored quickly and started to interrupt her teaching. Therefore, she had to integrate more advanced lessons to accommodate students' different English abilities. Chen also called on these advanced students to act as teaching assistants to help less advanced students during classroom activities.

Wang had an experience similar to Chen's. Wang also was an English instructor in a buxiban. She used communicative language teaching (CLT) as required in that buxiban. After she was certified as an English language teacher for the elementary level, she continued to use CLT in her classroom, but she received complaints from parents saying that nobody understood what she said. That was when she realized that most students had not learned English before entering her class. With regard to teaching the English language in the buxibans, Wang stated:

I figured that the requirement from the English language policy is quite different from the reality. I mean . . . the policy is telling us to use CLT in the class, so I did, but the reality turned out worse than I expected. I wasn't the only one who encountered the same problem, ugh.

Wang's school had no choice but to divide students into two classes by the students' English language scores. The advanced level was for those who already had learned basic English, and the beginning level was for students who did not learn English prior to entering elementary school. Wang also mentioned the conflicts between regular English language school teachers and buxiban instructors, regarding teaching instruction. Students who attend English language buxibans often argue with their school English teachers about pronunciation and accent. Although participants teach students an American accent, they mentioned different accents used in other English-speaking countries. However, buxiban instructors insist that students use a particular accent and do not believe as Wang does. Xu had a similar problem regarding her students being taught at buxibans: that the English language has only one pronunciation. Her students believed the buxiban instructors over the

public school English language teachers. “Buxiban instructors can’t brainwash kids and parents; otherwise, the regular school teachers can’t teach at all,” she concluded.

Hong is also challenged by students regarding pronunciation, but he prepares for this situation by explaining the different accents. He has a positive attitude about English language buxibans:

I think it can supply what we don’t have at school. As long as they recruit certified English teachers, I obtain a positive attitude toward private English institution. I used to have more than 30 students, sometimes [I] may not be able to help each student, so if they can go to buxibans. I know some students have learned a lot of English, they are not interested in my class, and it’s OK. I will give them extra curricula. However, they need to get good grades since they know everything, and they have to prove what they can!

In regular elementary schools, ELE focuses on developing English listening and speaking skills, and later grammar, but students learn much more vocabulary and grammar in buxibans. These same students go back to regular schools, where they become disruptive and question teachers’ knowledge. Li said that her students who attend English language buxibans like to “test” her English grammar and see whether she is qualified to teach them. Yu has been challenged constantly regarding pronunciation and grammar in her class, and she said that buxiban instructors have taught her students incorrect pronunciation. She, therefore, must spend time correcting students’ pronunciation. “It makes it harder to teach at schools since we have teaching protocols to follow,” Yu said, meaning that each semester, English language teachers must cover a lot of content. However, with only two English classes a week, she does not want to waste time arguing with students about English grammar. As an

English language teacher, she usually double-checks the different English pronunciations and the grammar, but if students insist that what the buxiban instructors say is right, the only thing she can ask students to do is follow her explanation in her class and the buxiban's at the buxiban. Thus, Yu is concerned about the qualifications of English instructors in buxibans.

Not only was Yu concerned about buxiban teacher qualifications, but Ke also disagreed with the way the English language buxibans advertise ELE. Ke said that some buxibans promote their business with whole-language programs. Several years ago, she encountered foreign teachers teaching whole language in buxibans even though these instructors had not gone through an English language education program or any training in their own countries. They basically were not qualified to teach the English language. They were hired because they were native English speakers, and buxiban owners wanted to use native English speakers to promote their businesses. Although the local education bureau mandated that only foreigners introduced by the intermediary agency would receive working permits, Ke still found buxibans offering whole-language programs to kindergarten students. However, even if these foreign teachers are certified to teach English, they do not have the background needed to teach pre-school children. Ke once asked students about attending a whole-language kindergarten program in a buxiban:

I asked them whether they learned anything from those English speakers. They said "not really." They actually didn't know what those teachers were teaching because these students couldn't understand English at all. They were forced by their parents.

She was unhappy about English language buxibans promoting the idea that foreign speakers are better than Taiwanese English language teachers. In her school, teachers try to communicate with parents regarding those untruthful advertisements from the English

language buxibans. However, most parents are busy working and see these English language buxibans as daycare centers. They believe their children not only are safe but also able to learn English at the same time. Additionally, parents believe that native English speakers teach correct pronunciation and grammar. Parents with high socioeconomic status, as well as working-class parents, confront these circumstances. Ke said, “Some working-class parents work hard just to send their kids to buxibans like the middle class. The working class wants their kids to climb up to middle class. That’s the only way they can help their children in terms of ELE.” She concluded with the following:

I think it has become a culture, even if I don’t like it. The buxiban system is rooted in the educational system. It’s essential, nothing we can change, and even parents believe in the buxiban system. They don’t believe our school teachers anymore.

Ke was not the only one who thought that attending English language buxibans has become part of the culture. Chen said that “the buxi[ban] culture in Taiwan is really popular.” Chen had worked in an English language buxiban, so she had known children who started to learn English at the age of 3. When she became certified to teach in her current school, she found that children who learned English in bilingual or whole-language buxibans at the kindergarten level argued with her about the grammar they learned in buxibans. Zhou encountered the same problem and said:

Although there are conflicts between school teachers and buxiban instructors, there is nothing we can do since buxiban has become a culture in Taiwan. Students usually argue grammar and pronunciation with me because they learn different at buxiban. It’s hard to convince them to believe me, but it’s their choice. There is nothing I can do.

Yu shared the same frustration as Zhou. She said, “The popularity of buxibans are blooming, and there is nothing we can do. Maybe it’s a time to talk to those instructors and ask them to work with school teachers.”

Due to my own curiosity about the popularity of the English language buxiban, I looked for buxiban commercials on television, and I found two to three commercials related to English language buxibans regularly show up during TV commercials. In the research areas, I also saw flyers often clipped from newspapers. These buxibans offered a variety of English language classes, from preschool through adult, and arranged lessons ranging from children’s bilingual programs to preparation for English language proficiency tests. The reason Taiwanese parents rely on the buxibans is that schools offer only two classes a week, and each class is only 50 minutes, which is too little time for students to learn English fluently. ELE in regular elementary school focuses more on listening and speaking and less on grammar structure. However, ELE at the middle school level emphasizes reading and writing, which requires sound knowledge of English grammar.

According to Zhou, in Taiwanese culture, parents like to plan ahead for children’s education. They do not want their kids to “lose at the start point,” which means that when their children stand at the starting line of a race with other children, they want their children to be advanced so as to win over all the other runners. Much like the “Brothers” in Macleod’s (1995) famous study, Taiwanese parents believe in achievement ideology. As long as they provide the access of ELE to their children, it is not hard for children to pass exams at school. Ma explained that parents may be able to help their children with mathematics or chemistry subjects at home, but not the English language, because parents do not use English in their daily life. Particularly, in this rural area, people communicate with

each other in dialects or in Mandarin. Parents may not be able to teach their children the English language themselves. ELE follows students from elementary through college as a required subject, so parents want their children to learn English as early as possible so parents and students do not have to worry about grades in English. To ease parents' concerns, English language buxibans have established an integrated set of curricula that covers ELE for elementary and middle schools. With this "temptation" in place, parents are willing to send their children to buxibans to learn the English language.

However, this culture seems to create conflicts in English language teaching between buxiban instructors and regular school English language teachers. For example, Xu commented:

One thing I think cramming schools are brainwashing parents by advertising and broadcasting commercials on TV. Their slogans are like "no English, no good paid job." If you need a job, you need to learn English. You can become elite if you come here to study English. Well, I don't think so because there are good paid jobs that don't need English language.

When I brought up statements of English language buxibans in the focus group discussion, most talked about the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), which is required for each college student before he or she graduates. Some middle-school and high-school students take this test as extra credit when applying for their ideal high school or college. The slogan says that if students do not pass the test, they will lack advantages in applying for schools, jobs, and work promotions.

Buxibans attract students wanting to prepare for the GEPT (Yu, 1999). Xu acknowledged that the test is required now to graduate from college, so students have no

choice but to take it. It is a reality that English is required, but she said it is not necessary if one's job does not require English language skills. Zhou said that she does not think a person is hired based on English language ability and that professional skills are more important. English is an extra added benefit. Wang and Xie shared the opinion in that the benefits of learning English depend on the type of job that individuals perform. Some jobs do not require English language skills, and some do. In addition, test scores do not always correctly demonstrate English communication fluency. Participants pointed out the reason the English language buxibans exist, and that is to help students pass tests. These teachers understand the influence of buxibans. The purpose of reform of the educational system was to eliminate the National Entrance Exam and relieve students of the anxiety of so many high-stakes tests. The MOE had hoped to banish the buxibans after the National Entrance Exam was eliminated. However, the new educational system gives students even more tests and also examines students' extracurricular activities for admission into universities. This has given buxibans a chance to expand their business by offering extracurricular coursework in English language skills and other subjects such as painting, piano, dance, and technology.

The participants warned that students may receive the required score to pass the test by attending a buxiban, but this does not mean the students have acquired fluent communicative skills in English. These participants think of the English language as a tool and believe that parents and students should not grant special status to the English language.

The next section of this chapter presents participants' viewpoints regarding the role of the English language as it relates to social mobility and to education credentials in Taiwan.

Under the Taiwanese credential and test-based system, parents become competitive and are not happy with their children when they fall behind at school. Parents' beliefs

toward ELE include sending their children to English language buxibans as soon as possible, so the children will not have to worry about English language tests at all. When parents see that their children are achieving more than others at school, they feel proud and therefore see the financial cost of the buxiban as worth the expense. However, parents are creating an issue of class management for English language teachers at schools. Participants claimed that students who already had learned English prior to their classes have problems concentrating in class but feel superior to others who did not learn the language before coming to school. According to Wu (2008), Taiwanese parents believe cultivating children's worldview is sending them to buxibans to learn the English language. Once their children start to speak some English, they believe the children are different from those who do not speak English. At the same time, they believe these children do not have to worry about their English language tests at schools. Whether English language buxibans fulfill parents' vanity and maintain a feeling of superiority or help students get through school tests, parents from the middle class have more social and economic capital to increase their children's cultural capital, especially in institutions (Park, 2009; SEO, 2010). Cultural capital reflects values and habitual practices that determine how a family gains access to valuable resources (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social Mobility, ELE, and Credentials

This section illustrates participants' perceptions of social reproduction and education in Taiwan. Participants agreed that social stratification exists because of parents' socioeconomic status and educational level. In this society, everything is judged by one's academic degrees, job titles, and salaries. In particular, academic degrees play an important role. According to participants, Taiwanese parents still believe in the saying "the worth of

other pursuits is small, the study of books excels them all (Hui, 2005).” Even parents from disadvantaged groups cater to the mainstream idea regarding academic degrees. These parents also will try to save money and send their children to buxibans. They are not able to teach their own children, so buxibans are an enticing means to the end, which is to get extra help outside of regular schooling.

According to Ross (2008), meritocracy has become the standard model in industrialized countries. Often, tests are used to gain access to education and employment, and foreign language tests play a key role. Therefore, many students use scores of English language tests to apply for prestigious middle schools and high schools and to find occupations. Credentials are important to an individual’s career opportunities in Taiwan. Credentials become part of a person’s identity. Since education is seen to provide those credentials, education is seen as a way to move from a lower socioeconomic status to a higher one. The following paragraphs contain statements that participants made while discussing how people get to be in different classes. This elicited English language teachers’ understanding of social reproduction and social mobility in Taiwan.

Gao has been teaching ELE in a remote rural township for seven years. She grew up in a big city an hour away from the school where she teaches. Her parents are public servants. Her mom works as an administrator in a middle school and planned Gao’s teaching occupation when she was little. Gao said, “I guess I am well protected by my parents, and I never had to worry about money issues, schooling problems. [My] parents take care of everything. I guess I am from the so-called advantaged group.” Gao continued, “When I first arrived at the school where I teach, I was shocked by the environment around the school. It’s in the middle of a rice field, looks old, and the paint is peeling.”

According to Gao, most of the students' parents are working class and care little about their children's education because they are busy working and trying to support their family. Plus, her students have to help in the fields after school. Therefore, her students are not interested in the English language, and they have even called English an "alien language." She said:

I realize that there are poor people, and they don't live in the place like I do. They don't receive the same education as I did. It was like a culture shock to me. I felt guilty . . . haha. . . I mean, I have parents who know how to work with the social system and provide me the opportunity to maintain a middle-class [status]. My students don't have parents to help them. In Taiwan, people usually judge individual's status by their academic degrees, job titles, and salaries. I guess that's why we have social hierarchy.

After Gao answered my question, I asked whether she regretted teaching in a remote school.

Her reply:

I think it depends on how you define the working place. I think I am not afraid of any challenge; I will go find resources. I won't change my mind going to other schools because here is more challenging than those in big cities. Resource problems and low-achievement students, students don't have hobbies to read, not even English letter A, B, C. They may not know how to speak Mandarin well.

Gao is the only English language teacher in that school, so she has to work with the school principal and find resources for her English language class. When asked how these children move to the middle class, she said that education is their ticket because Taiwan's educational system focuses on exams. If students can pass exams and earn degrees, they can find jobs

and change their lives. However, lacking resources is one of her concerns, and students' learning motivation is another. In Gao's view, because of their living environment, parents and students do not care much about education. Even if parents care about it, they know nothing about the English language. She expressed her frustration: "I have been thinking about how to inspire students' values of education for prospective jobs." She asked the school principal to write grants to receive English curricula and audio hardware to create an English learning environment that each day will offer different activities to practice English.

She seemed eager to teach students the English language, when I asked about her reasons. She said that most students tend to give up on an English language class if they do not learn English in elementary school. Although English language classes at the elementary level focus only on speaking and listening skills, when students go to middle school, they will not be so afraid of learning English. She continued by saying that middle school teachers usually assume that students already know the English alphabet and pronunciation, so they focus on grammar. If a student does not learn the alphabet and pronunciation in elementary school, then student will face a lot of pressure to memorize the alphabet and grammar all at once. In the end, students lose interest in learning the language.

Yu has taught in elementary school for 22 years, 12 of them teaching ELE. She came from a rural township in which her father was a worker at the train station. She used herself and her friend as examples of social stratification:

Hmm. . . I think the social hierarchy existed a long, long, long time ago. Uh . . . take myself as an example. I have a friend, and she is extremely rich. She was born to be rich. Her ancestors learned how to do business with Japanese during that 50-year colonization. Her ancestors made a lot of money. Their family business has gone

well since then. She never had to worry about financial issues. Unlike her, I had to work my way to become a teacher, and I think I was lucky to pass national exam. Some of my students are not able to do that. Status tends to stay the same from generation to generation. This is why some people are rich and some stay poor. Although her school is located in an urban township, she teaches students from working-class backgrounds. Parents of the school's children did not receive much education and work as laborers in construction sites or in fish farms. Thus, to help students move between social classes, she said, "Education is the only way for disadvantage people to 'climb up' to the upper level." She offered more:

Because disadvantaged students don't have resources, they can't have access to certain resources. Parents can't help them, so they need to rely on school and teachers who can help them gain access. [. . .] Taiwanese society still focuses on students' diploma. Without education, no diploma, then no jobs.

Yu said she sees herself as an example of someone who moved from a disadvantaged environment to the middle class. She is willing to help students learn English, especially those who cannot attend an English language buxiban. She explained that students who do not attend buxiban usually resist learning English and failing the class in middle school. This is the reason she likes to push students to learn as much English as possible so that they would feel comfortable using it once they go to middle school.

The next example is Li, who has 15 years of teaching experience at the elementary level and 10 years teaching ELE. Li's father was a railroad worker, and they lived in a rural township. Her father was strict about her homework and grades at school, and he always wanted Li to study harder so it would be more likely she could get a better job. She passed

the National Entrance Exam and entered a top high school, then went on to higher education. Her school is located in the center of an urban township. The school has a gifted class that many doctors' and lawyers' children attend and also has children from fishery families. She said:

Hmm . . . it's like Darwin's idea of evolution by natural selection, only the fittest survive. The wealth and power were unequally distributed generations ago. Rich people inherit money from their ancestors. They also know how to maintain their status, but poor people are on the bottom of the food chain and they never earn more than those rich people. Well . . . maybe there are a few making it to the middle class, but it's hard to make it to the higher class. I worked my way up to become a teacher, and it is a middle-class position in this society, so I definitely want to help my kids to at least maintain at the same level.

She looked helpless because job titles and salaries are important in this society; they are marks of status in Taiwan. Li further explained that those people in the higher socioeconomic class generally have inherited a fortune from the previous generation, and that's why they can maintain their status. However, students from the working class may be able to work up to the middle class through education, which is the only way to make that move. She said:

Our society is still focusing on individual's academic degree, so if a person from a lower class, getting a higher educational degree is the way to get a better job with higher pay. I don't say it's easy, but it's a chance!

In Li's school, English teachers have autonomy in terms of lesson planning and equipment needed for classes. The principal is usually supportive and willing to help.

However, students' English proficiency differs. Students in the gifted class already have learned English at buxibans or bilingual kindergartens, and most students in regular classes never have studied English before. The school ends up dividing students into two levels, based on their English test scores. Students with higher grades are put in level A, and those with lower grades are placed in level B. According to Li, curricula are used differently in the two classes, but if students in level B make progress on English tests, they will be moved to level A. In contrast, students in level A will be demoted to level B if their grades regress. The teachers hope that students can learn as much English as possible so that they do not fall behind after they enter middle school.

Yu and Li understand the reality of social stratification in Taiwan and agreed that education is the key for students striving to move to a higher social class. Unlike Yu and Li, Xu held a different viewpoint regarding status and education. Xu's father was a school teacher, so he expected Xu to teach as well. She majored in the English language in college and had experience teaching in an English buxiban. She took the exams to become an elementary English teacher and then entered preparatory programs to gain certification as an English language teacher. Although her school is located in an urban township, the school principal is conservative.

According to Xu, the principal does not allow field trips for English language lessons but requires more tests that do not help the students practice their English language communication skills. On the subject of social stratification in Taiwan, she said:

Well . . . we have different class stratification in this society. It existed a long time ago, I guess. Each one is doing different jobs with different pay, so they get more pay if they are doing white-collar jobs, and vice versa. Some rich people already

inherited a fortune from their ancestors, so they are born to be rich. But others may not be so lucky that they have to get their hands dirty to earn money.

When asked how people can move between social classes, Xu said that Taiwanese parents still believe that education is the only way to move out of a lower socioeconomic status.

Whether individuals need to receive education depends on what kinds of jobs they want to do, Xu said. If they want to become public servants, they may need a university education. If they want to be a construction worker or a grocery clerk, they don't need much education; rather, they need skills. Xu also said that students from the lower class often look down on themselves, and she used the examples of owners of big companies who worked their way to the top even though they did not receive much education. "All roads lead to Rome," Xu continued, "no matter what those students do, doing their best is more important than their socioeconomic status."

As I went further and asked her about students who do not learn English well in her class, she said:

Well, maybe my students who don't want to learn English end up doing other jobs that don't require English, such as grocery stores, construction sites, or truckers.

Don't get me wrong, I am not discriminating against these jobs. We all need people occupied in different social statuses in this society. In this society, there are people meant to belong to a certain class. If my students fall into the lower-class, I can't help.

She cannot influence parents' thoughts, she said, if they choose to maintain their status.

Although Xu vented her frustration on students who are not learning English, her statement

placed blame on the parents' status. Essentially, she said that students are poor because their parents wanted them to be poor. However, people are not destined for a lower class.

Then she became excited and told me that fishermen are usually wealthier than teachers and that maybe those fishermen want their children to inherit their jobs, which do not require a university degree or English language skills. In the focus group discussion, we talked about working-class parents rarely sending their children to learn English in a buxiban. Xu disagreed and mentioned again that fishermen make more money than public servants. She continued, "Unlike teachers, who are seen as white collars, fishermen are working in dirt and seen as working class, but the social class does not equal economic status." She did not seem to perceive education as a key to moving between social classes but insisted that students can make money as long as they obtain a skill. She seemed to forget that she could become a teacher because her father, who was a school teacher, had known how to work within the social system and pointed out a direction for her. However, these fishermen have to "work in dirt" to save money for their children to receive more education.

Furthermore, Xu accepted her school achievement ideology and became a teacher who internalized the value of being "educated" and speaking English. Like the "Brothers" in MacLeod's study (1995), she believed that each generation needs to work harder and harder, and they will do well in school and in the workplace, so they will be upwardly mobile. On the contrary, Xu believed that her working-class students reject school achievement ideology because they do not see hard work in the classroom is their pathway to success.

Here, Xu contradicts her comments by saying that students got ahead because their parents were rich, meaning there was no merit involved. At the same time, she embraces the achievement ideology because that is the way she got ahead. However, she believes that her

success of becoming an English teacher was not because her parents were rich but rather because her capabilities and merits allowed her to get ahead, which her students do not earn. She ignored the fact that students' social conditions may keep them from acquiring English skills. As Taiwanese people are educated under an alleged meritocracy, inequality is seen as fair because everyone has at least an adequate chance to succeed, as long as those who are the most talented and hardworking succeed (McNamee & Miller, 2014).

In Chen's school, the parents of many of the children worked as laborers and usually did not have time to supervise their children's homework, including English language lessons. Chen said it is easy for her to tell whether students have learned English prior to entering elementary school. She elaborated:

Mmm . . . we can't choose a rich or poor family to be born into. Rich people usually have more resources than the poor, so they definitely learn English faster and better than the poor. The poor will have to rely on the educational system, such as passing the entrance exam in order to get higher education then get better jobs. But the education system is unfair. How can the poor get to the higher class is a cliché because this society is unequal already, so it is really hard. Well . . . maybe the poor will meet some good teachers who can guide them to pass exams and get higher education.

She continued, saying that children living in rural areas, especially those in working-class families, need the support of the school principal as well as of their teachers. During the interview, the school principal came into the office to get Chen's signature on some paperwork, and Chen took the opportunity to ask the principal for new activities to help her students' English communication skills. The principal seemed to be supportive. Chen said

that parents who are not able to send their children to English language buxibans usually come to her for help. She burns DVDs and lets students take them home to practice their English.

Chen complained that English resources are not distributed equally between urban and rural areas. There is a need for English language teachers at different elementary schools, but no one wants to teach in this remote area because it has fewer resources and less personnel. Apart from Chen, most participants voiced a similar concern that resources and scholarships are hard to come by in the rural areas. English language teachers must strive to get them. Wang said that even administrators at the local MOE bureau once said that students living in this rural area do not need to learn English because they can make money by fishing. According to Wang, the MOE administrators said that working-class parents do not realize the value of education, and therefore, their status is perpetuated with their children. These parents usually do not care much about children's education because no matter what the parents do, their children are likely to end up doing the same kind of work as their parents. All participants agreed that family background connects with social status, and the parents' status plays a significant role in their children's educational choices.

According to a study by Lareau (2000), middle-class parents participate in school activities and support teachers' efforts by connecting institution and family life together, whereas working-class parents separate school and life by focusing on children's disciplines. Working-class parents seldom supervise teachers or support school, and these conflicts with teachers' visions of children's schooling. Lareau (2000) argues that teachers have conflicts with working-class parents because they do not support the way working-class parents

educate their children. Working-class parents often feel intimidated by school because their ways of interacting with teachers and administrators are rejected.

However, many English language teachers worked their way through higher education and now have better jobs than their parents. Although resources are limited, these teachers still think education is essential for social mobility.

Participants recalled their time before the educational system was reformed. As mentioned in Chapter 2, our educational system was based on two National Entrance Exams (NEEs): the first was for entering high school, vocational school, or five-year colleges, and the second was for entering universities.

Participants' ages ranged from the 30s through the 50s, and they had taken these so-called one-shot NEEs for their high school education and higher education. As they compared the former and the current educational systems, they believed the old one was more fair. Although the NEE was "one shot," everybody at least got a chance to take it. The curriculum every student used back then was only one version designed by the National Institution for Compilation and Translation, which is under the MOE. Although students attended different schools, everybody had the same edition of the textbooks and studied the same content. Therefore, the exams focused on the same curricula, and students did not have to rely on *buxibans*. As a result, NEEs gave working-class students an opportunity to receive a higher education. At that time, ELE was a subject taught in middle school, and middle school students were not required to learn speaking skills in English. This is why Li, who was from a working-class family and who lived in a rural township, was able to receive a higher education through NEEs. She did not need to attend English language *buxibans* to help her prepare for the English language exams. Other participants who were from similar

backgrounds also had taken the NEEs and were educated in universities. All participants said that the old system was stale and used rote learning that lacked creativity, but the test-based system gives children from disadvantaged groups the chance to receive scores sufficient to enter prestigious schools. Chang (2006) confirmed that the fairness of NEEs allows students from the working-classes and lower-classes to receive a higher education and to change their status.

After educational system reform in 1998, the Taiwanese government turned over its power to local governments. That change was to eliminate the NEE's stress for students and to create a diversified and autonomic learning environment. In exchange for NEEs, the MOE set up comprehensive exams for both high schools and universities, and students have multiple options to choose admissions steps by (a) applying, (b) meeting requirements and passing the entrance exam for the special subject of the individual school, and (c) registering and then being assigned to a school (MOE, 2005). In Taiwan, credentials are the way for students from rural areas to move their status upward. Participants in this study came mostly from different townships, and their parents worked in agricultural fields, construction labor, or small businesses such as grocery stores. Their parents did not receive much education but wanted the participants to change their social status through education. According to Wang, parents usually play an important role in making decisions about their children's education. Her parents received educational information from customers coming to their stores or by contacting school teachers. This is her way to gain access to cultural capital, but other working-class children may not have the same access. Unlike other working-class parents, Wang's parents embraced the achievement ideology. They believed that if they pushed

Wang to study English hard, she could become a teacher at a school instead of working in a grocery store. Wang's parents believed that the equality of opportunity exists nowadays.

Bourdieu (1986) stated that cultural capital is not the only capital accruing to individuals. Alongside cultural capital, social capital and economic capital create advantages and disadvantages in society. Social capital is produced through social processes between the family and social networks within the larger society, whereas economic capital is inherited wealth or money/assets one earns. These forms of capital are interconnected, so economic capital can be converted into cultural capital, and cultural capital can be transformed into social capital. Participants' parents may not have had cultural capital, but the parents could use social capital and economic capital to help their children. Furthermore, participants said that their parents wanted them to become teachers because working-class parents view teaching school as a stable job.

Social mobility is constrained by graduation from universities in Taiwan. After the educational system was reformed in 2000, students had multiple pathways through which to enter high schools/universities, and English language ability became one of the extra points for applying to schools. Therefore, some children started to learn the English language in buxibans at the age of 5, so they were able to stand out and represent their schools in English language competitions. Their awards will make their application look better than others. Plus, passing the GEPT test is another way to add an extra point on their school application.

Students also need to pass the GEPT test before they graduate from a university. In the focus group discussion, Gao's friend, who majored in pasturage (the occupation of pasturing cattle, sheep, or other grazing animals), failed the GEPT test. She said, "He cannot

graduate this year, so cruel [since] this is his second time of failing.” Asked whether he needs to use the English language when working in the pasturage field, Zhang replied:

When students graduate, they do not use it, that’s true, but passing the GEPT test has to do with school reputation. If a prestigious university wants to keep its fame, students are expected to do well in English language, so the test is mandatory!

Huang said that passing the GEPT test is an asset not only for graduating from universities but for job hunting because “it is the reality of English’s role in Taiwan.” Xie confirmed that many companies do not want to spend extra money to hire interpreters, so they want to hire people with certificates from the GEPT test to deal with international trade. Students need to take the English proficiency test whether or not they need English to graduate. The English language is becoming a gear wheel in terms of one’s social mobility.

According to Sakamoto and Powers (1995), universities in East Asian countries are stratified into elite and non-elite universities, and selective elite universities screen students’ test scores and extra talents. English language plays a central role in screening students in the high school and university admissions process (SEO, 2010). In the United States, graduates from prestigious universities generally are highly recognized and receive social and economic rewards (Collins, 1971), and Taiwan is no exception to this rule.

Attitudes Toward ELE

In this section, I have first presented participants’ comments on their eagerness to learn the English language in Taiwan as a sign of venerating American education. In the following section, participants delivered their discourses about ELE as it becomes a mark of social distinction. In the last section, they shared experience of using English and experience when working with colleagues and parents.

Critiques on American education. Participants discussed their attitudes about speaking with an American accent and about teaching approaches. As mentioned in the literature review, we take English-speaking countries as the standard in terms of teaching approaches and selecting curricula. The countries participants mentioned include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Kubota (2002) says the United States and the United Kingdom are the main countries that supply “native-speaking” English teachers to Japan. In Taiwan, this seems to be the case, but Price (2005) states that a North American accent is considered the “standard” for ELE. Teachers from these countries frequently are valued highly for teaching positions in Taiwan. When talking to the research participants regarding their perspectives on acquiring a native-like American accent, all said they learned American English, which means they obtained an American accent because their English language teachers were either Americans or Taiwanese teachers who received academic degrees in the United States. Therefore, they use the same standard to teach their students.

Asked whether they adjust students’ American accents, all said they do not push students to pronounce native-like English as long as the students’ English is understandable. Native-like pronunciation means American English. Tao once had an English language teacher who had studied in the United States so she learned to speak with an American accent. She acknowledged, however, that there are other accents, including British, Indian, and other English accents. “I don’t require or force them to pronounce perfectly. As long as they have the fluency, it’s good enough,” she concluded. Ke also said that fluency is more important than the accent, so she does not force students to sound like Americans. Xie said there is no

way we can acquire native-like English unless we spend time living in a native English environment. Ma said something similar:

I personally don't correct my students' American, I mean . . . come on . . . we don't speak English in Taiwan. Plus, even foreigners speak English in different accents.

As long as we can communicate and understand each other [in English], it is fine! Ma meant that English language teachers in schools use an American English standard to teach, but this does not mean that we need to speak English just like Americans. She thinks we should emphasize communicative skills in English instead of seeking to speak with an American accent.

Two people, however, have no choice but to correct students' accents. Xu and Wang work in different elementary schools, and their schools usually send students to participate in English language competitions, such as English reading, speech, and spelling events, each year. Both understand that there is regional English and that Taiwanese judges prefer to hear American accents, so they feel as if they have to use what the judges' favor.

Lin said we should be critical of worshipping an American English and culture. She said, "I think acquiring native-like English is Americanized superiority in Taiwan. I don't know how to say this, but I don't think we need to follow the rule of American pronunciation because there are different kinds of English with different accents." English is just a tool, she said, and people should not feel superior to others because they have acquired English language skills. To her, implementing ELE programs in elementary school is a good idea because students then do not have to spend money to go to buxibans. However, instead of focusing on communicative skills, buxiban instructors emphasize the American accent. Yu added that Taiwanese people still prefer American English because the United States is the

strongest nation in the world. In addition, these teachers use English teaching methods from the United States. Participants avoided the power of U.S. hegemony by saying English is “just” a tool. The dominance of American media and products gives the United States opportunities to promote globalization and spread their values worldwide. The United States also facilitate the global spread of English (Tsuda, 2008). The political hegemony is turned into a way that American English is equated to English. American English becomes the norm that Taiwan ELE targets, and it is shown in English textbooks and is used in Taiwan.

The participants also had a lot to say about how the Taiwanese educational system is trying to copy the U.S. system. Lin said that the reason we try to learn what the United States is doing is to give students more opportunities to learn. In response to the banned National Entrance Exams, she said:

I understand that the MOE wants to give everybody a chance to get education, but I still see unfairness among social status. The richer get more and more privilege on getting resources; the poor may not have access to those (resources).

Education is the only way for students to gain social status, she said, especially for those from the lower-class. Each student had a chance to take the NEEs before the system was reformed, and there was only one version of the textbook, so if students studied, they could pass the exams. More versions of textbooks were created after the system was reformed. Thus, students had to spend more money and time studying for tests. As for an English language education, Lin said that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds usually learn English in bilingual or whole-language buxibans. However, most students do not learn English, and therefore Lin feels challenged in using the CLT approach in her class because

only one or two students can understand the instructions. The other students do not know what she is saying. Therefore, she has had to go back to the teacher-centered approach.

Chen explained that in the CLT methods, students need to have an English environment and to acquire a certain level of English ability to understand teachers' instructions. However, Taiwanese children were not born in an English-speaking environment, so students must learn all at once phonics, vocabulary, and sentence structure. CLT instruction has been difficult to implement in her class, and she said there is not sufficient time for students to absorb the content. Students do not use English except in the classroom. Therefore, even our local English teachers try to learn how people teach CLT in the United States, but they do not learn it well.

Chen meant that it is impossible to follow English teaching methods from the United States, which has a different educational system and culture from Taiwan. She concluded that we eventually end up worshipping foreign things and fawning over foreign powers.

Li did not agree that teachers live abroad to learn educational practices that they will use in Taiwan. She said, "The American cultural, educational, and social systems are different from what we have in Taiwan. . . . I have to say the U.S. system doesn't fit into the Taiwanese education system because we already are used to our original system." She explained that students' English levels are extremely different, and there is difficulty in using the CLT approach. Also, our schools do not have an assessment to evaluate students' "speaking" skills at the elementary level. We still offer written tests that cannot evaluate the proficiency of students' communicative skills in the English language.

Xu explained that teachers need to mix and match English teaching methods and should not rely solely on the CLT method. When she learned theories of English teaching,

she thought the theories were good but did not think they fit in the learning context of Taiwan. Because most of her students know nothing about English, especially those from rural areas, they do not know the language or American culture. The curriculum she uses to teach English contains many references to American culture (e.g., holidays). Her students, however, do not know why American holidays exist, and this makes it difficult to stimulate their motivation to learn. Xu said, “We have to try to implement Taiwanese culture into English class, otherwise, students were not born in the U.S., they can’t empathize with the language.” Gao shared the same situation about her students not knowing American culture:

 Hmm. . . . When students start to learn English, they don’t understand that language at all, even the alphabet. They don’t know how to pronounce words. I have to slow down my teaching and start from the basic English. Their Mandarin is already not good. Now I add the pressure of learning English on top of Mandarin. Students tell me they don’t use English, so they don’t want to learn it. Hmm. . . . I don’t think they understand what American culture is.

Most of Gao’s students are from working-class families, and their parents have limited education. Therefore, her students work hard to learn Mandarin and English at the same time. However, they do not know why they need to learn American culture, such as the celebrations of Halloween or Thanksgiving. Gao’s students barely know the English alphabet. It is hard to make CLT useful in her class. Similar to Taiwanese English teachers, English teachers in other countries, such as China and Korea, also are constrained in implementing new teaching methods, new curriculum, and class sizes. There are debates about the effectiveness of using “Western” methods to teaching English in non-English speaking countries (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Ellis, 1996; Li, 1998). Local English teachers

share conflicts about using CLT methods while they prepare students for national entrance exams because English tests focus mainly on knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but CLT methods require student-centered curriculum that includes communication, sociolinguistics, and cultural knowledge of the target language, English.

Huang claimed that scholars and professors engaged in English language teaching and research in the United States encourage English language teachers in Taiwan to incorporate American teaching methods. Her school has limited personnel and resources, she said, and that it is already difficult to meet the requirements of the government's ELE policy.

Due to the lack of an English-speaking environment, elementary schools cooperated with a local education foundation and the local government to establish International English Villages in certain counties and cities beginning in 2007. These villages are located in schools and have open classrooms that are built around themes, such as airports, restaurants, supermarkets, post offices, and other places pertinent to daily life. The purpose of these villages is to create a whole-language environment for students to actually use the English language with foreigners who are certified English language teachers. Elementary/middle-school students can attend any village nearby by making an appointment through an English language teacher. Many teachers take students to participate in activities at the International English Village. The following paragraphs contain the participants' viewpoints of this approach.

Zhou shared her frustration of utilizing the system of International English Villages, which is near her school. As she planned taking the students to the village, she encountered issues:

Well . . . they say everybody at elementary and middle school levels can utilize that village. However, we need to do paperwork to apply before we can get in. Yet, it takes a longer time to process the paperwork. They charge each kid fees. It's not much, but we have students who rely on welfare. The last thing students should have to worry about is the money. Also, we cannot go there anytime we want. I mean . . . ugh . . . the school who owns this English village makes it a school property, not community resources anymore.

Zhou said that while it's nice to see more resources coming to town, the required paperwork takes longer than expected because "they make accessible resources inaccessible." Although they finally had an experience at the English Village, Zhou started to wonder about the effectiveness and benefits to students' English language skills. Attending activities in the Village is like worshiping the English-speaking environment for several hours, but students' English speaking skills would not grow within a half-day.

Wang also said that the result of attending the program is limited because students only spend a half day there. Xie also shook his head and said the value is limited:

Well . . . it doesn't work much because they don't change themes in the village every year. They don't create new topics each year, so that is not a suitable learning environment. In a big city, a school is doing whole language environment where they teach every subject in English. The whole language environment actually makes students not to be afraid of using English.

Xie understood that the local government tried to create an English-speaking environment, but he described the International English Villages as a project of "one-time use only." Schools in southern townships are not capable of implementing whole language because they

lack money, knowledgeable decision makers, and sufficient English language teachers. He said that the decision makers should come up with a long-term plan of ELE that fits the learning environment in Taiwan instead of becoming a follower of ELE from American or European countries. He also shared his opinion regarding the worship of American education:

If we sanctify English language, we wouldn't treat it like this. I mean . . . we would give more learning hours for students. School principals, administrators, and homeroom teachers would create a learning environment together. Hmm . . . Taiwanese people think it's important to learn English, but we didn't really know how to establish an English learning environment. I mean . . . we can't just rely on a test. That's not right! Sigh . . . I think at the current stage, I will try to make students learn English in a happy way without giving them too many tests. They might figure out whether they want to learn this English or not!

He looked frustrated when telling me English teachers and school administrators and principals are not on the same page. English teachers want to create an English speaking environment at his school while school principals ask them for grades of written tests in English. If test scores are still the main priority, what is the purpose of the Taiwanese government promoting the International English Villages and English speaking skills? According to the Taiwanese government, enhancing students' English is to develop a global perspective and to expand business worldwide. However, learning English speaking skills will not provide a global perspective for students. The decision makers' sights of internationalization are too narrow if we think that "Englishization" equals "Internationalization." The dominance of English serves a role of promoting

internationalization in peripheral countries, and it also becomes a symbol of prestige that acts as a gatekeeper of social and economic progress (Tsuda, 2008). According to participants, people capable of speaking English are perceived to have superior status in Taiwan. Moreover, having a degree in higher education means one has to pass competitive entrance examinations, most of which require high English test scores. Thus, one's English ability determines one's readiness for an advanced education and a better occupation. Those who do not own English ability as cultural capital will be placed on the bottom of the social structure.

Meanwhile, what is the cost benefit to build those villages? Our government and a sponsor from a local education foundation spent millions of dollars to build International English Villages (Executive Yuan, 2009), and students use only the English language while attending the village. They are not motivated to speak English after they leave the village. In participants' opinions, the establishment of International English Villages is evidence that Taiwan's government worships the notion that "authentic English speaking should be taught by the foreign English teachers."

Taiwanese ELE seems to view American English and the American educational system as the standard for ELE preparation in Taiwan. This is because of the relationship between the Taiwanese and American governments. The U.S. government has a dominant position globally. This influences the development of ELE in Taiwan. According to the participants, curriculum is developed around American English and culture. This is also why we hope to learn an American accent instead of an accent from other English-speaking countries, because it is "pleasant to hear." Participants think we worship the United States too much and that we underestimate the abilities of local English language teachers.

The participants are those who work most closely with students. They think accents are unimportant and believe it is more practical to enhance English skills. Participants think that the English language policy is made for students living in big cities, not those in rural townships. According to the English language teachers in this study, ELE in the southern county where they teach always lacks resources, funding, and teachers.

In this study, participants were interviewed about the reasons they wanted to learn English and to become teachers. As mentioned in the literature review, nine-year, mandatory, free education was introduced, and English courses became necessary for junior high school students after 1968 (Su, 1990). During that period, English was a subject that students needed to study to pass the entrance examinations for high schools and universities. Therefore, all of the participants started to learn English in middle school. They received higher scores on English exams during the NEEs, so they decided to major in English linguistics or literature before they were certified as English language teachers. Some had several years of experience teaching in different cities, so they had different experiences with regard to getting along with colleagues and parents.

Participants said that the Taiwanese worship anything foreign, especially ELE methods from the United States. In Taiwan, we do not have our own infrastructure to teach the English language, and this is the reason we learn from the United States. Furthermore, the relationship with the American government was established during the 1950s, and the U.S. government has used Taiwan as a military base during wars in Asia. According to Lin (2003), as a backup base that provided American people with a place to stay, the base imported a lot of products in English, such as magazines, movies, music, and American culture. Although Taiwanese people were not colonized by the U.S. government, American

culture became known in Taiwan, and the intelligentsia thought that learning English was the only way to connect worldwide. Therefore, the pro-America ideology was passed down from generation to generation. This is why we still see the image of ELE as English equals “USA.” Phillipson (1992) argued that the English language in non-native English-speaking countries is viewed as a demand in the progress of internationalization, and the English language provides these countries a way to build an image of modernization. English language ability also has become a status distinction that elites use to differentiate themselves from others.

Phillipson’s statement reflects the ELE situation in Taiwan. Yu said, “People see English language teaching as a high class job.” And, Tao said, “When people know I am an English language teacher, they think I am smart.” The English language in Taiwan already has become a mark to represent an individual’s social status.

Mark of social distinction. Participants shared the benefits of being able to understand and speak the English language. Ten years ago, the MOE recruited English language teachers for elementary schools, so people who came from different fields took the language exam. According to one of participants, Wang, these exam-takers were English language instructors in buxibans, elementary teachers with degrees related to the English language, American-born Taiwanese, or people working for foreign companies. So these participants had obtained a mid-level or higher level of English ability. When asked about their feeling regarding their English skills, they were reluctant to discuss the topic. They do not think they are better than doctors or engineers because these people make more money than a school English teacher, and doctors and engineers do not need to acquire English skills. These participants avoid comparing their status to other school teachers but often switch

subjects and talk about other occupations categories, such as doctors or engineers. However, doctors or engineers have a higher standing, and they also have to learn English in their professional fields. Participants were unwilling to admit the status that English ability has brought to them, and they often say, “We are teachers who teach English at the very basic and simple level. There is nothing special to talk about.”

These participants denied their English performance generates social prestige (Friedman, 2003). English performance as cultural capital has symbolic values that are valuable in Taiwan. According to Bhatt (2001), English was successfully spread and became the language in international business because of the roles played by during the 19th century by the United States and the United Kingdom in the rise of industrial capitalism. In colonial Asian countries, the educational system becomes the instrument of reproducing English symbolic capital. Therefore, South Asian countries that were colonized showed a willingness to learn English because they considered English as a form of linguistic capital to accumulate economic power and political power. Even today, the power of English remains dominant because the United States controls political matters and international business worldwide.

Although participants denied that their English ability has become a status marker, in their journals they revealed good feelings about being capable of speaking English. Zhang wrote that her English language skills give her a chance not only to be certified in a teaching career but also give her confidence to teach children English. She said, “[I]t has become the most valuable asset to me that I was able to provide a good deal of natural language input to my students. Language teaching has become a lifelong job to me and definitely a great life interest as well.” Furthermore, she does not need help when she takes her family abroad for sightseeing. When asked whether English language ability is becoming a mark of status, she

said that English is not necessary in every occupation, but it has become an image label.

That is why many job offers require people to have some level of English proficiency. Some

companies even offer English language proficiency exams to interviewees. Zhang said,

“many parents and adults consider English proficiency to be a mark of elegance and nobility.”

To illustrate the status-oriented desire for English, Zhang used her cousin’s situation as an example. This cousin started to learn English in elementary school, but he does not have opportunities to use it; even his current job does not require much English. However, he called Zhang and asked her to find English names for him because everybody in the company uses an English name. She said:

English language has a special culture in that northern city, and everybody calls each other English names. It’s interesting that many people living in that city are learning English. If you don’t want to be different from others, you need to do the same.

Even if you don’t agree about this language and culture, you will try to immerse into that environment so you won’t look weird from others.

Adopting the English language in one’s life is like a national activity, and it has become a standard to expect everyone to do the same thing. According to Kastner (2010), 80% of Taiwanese people call themselves by an English name, even those who never studied English. Using an English name is as common, if not more common, than adopting a Chinese name. It is common for an individual to be required to write an English name on a job application. Unlike other south Asian countries that were previously colonized by the United Kingdom and the United States, Taiwan was colonized by the Japanese.

However, the Japanese colonial government started the procedure of name-changing by selecting a number of Taiwanese elites and rewarding them with the authority to rule the

rest of society. Those who stitched Chinese names to Japanese ones also earned a higher status. In 1960s, the United States relaxed its immigration laws by giving preferential status to people with skills, such as doctors and nurses. Many Taiwanese emigrated from Taiwan to the United States due to Taiwan's backward economy. Until the 1990s, some of these overseas Taiwanese returned along with wealth accumulated in the United States. Therefore, the local people who never left Taiwan regarded these overseas Taiwanese as those of the highest socio-economic status. Kastner (2010) states that those who returned to Taiwan from the United States use English names to stand apart from other Taiwanese people. This implies that Taiwanese people today prefer to be called by English names so that they can distinguish themselves from others. In Wang's (2009) study, students saw adapting English names as a social investment in imagined communities of English learning, working in a foreign company, or living in an English-speaking country. The power of English has become not only cultural capital, but the adoption of an English name also has become a social norm in Taiwan.

Ke had two experiences that make her believe that the English language is becoming a mark of social status. Moreover, she believes that English language ability is essential if one desires to move up in social status. Ke said that as she shops in department stores, she can tell the difference in others' eyes between being able or unable to speak English. For example, one clerk did not like her at first because she did not buy anything, then her children started to speak English with her, and the clerk became interested and asked her whether she was a Taiwanese living overseas. She explained, "So here comes the value of English language ability the people see in Taiwan. They see people with English ability represent higher class, more money, and better life!" Ke realized, when she traveled in

Taiwan, that English also can become a mark of identity. Her realization also occurred in a store. When she spoke Mandarin as she questioned the clerk, no one wanted to help her.

Then, she spoke in English, and the clerk changed her attitude. She said:

The clerk's attitude struck me, so I asked her the reason. She told me that in their stores, clerks think English speakers are from higher status, with better manners.

They don't like to serve Mandarin speakers who are usually loud and rude. It is interesting but sad at the same time when we are categorized by the hierarchy of languages (Ke's journal).

Being able to speak English definitely gave Wang benefits, and she received a "special treat" in Hong Kong, too. A friend had a bad experience in Hong Kong, and he complained about how rude people were. People were reluctant to serve him in shops. Even when he asked questions, their attitude was not enthusiastic at all. She said:

I told him that was strange because I felt really pampered last time when I was there.

The people in shops and restaurants were extremely nice to me. Then I asked what language he used, and he said Mandarin and Cantonese. And right there, I knew it was English that paid my special treat (Wang's journal).

Without a doubt, Wang said, being able to speak English means that people pay her more respect and treat her more politely. To Wang, English ability offers a feeling of satisfaction, which mirrors Xie's comments. Xie feels rewarded when he is able to understand movies in English, help English-speaking tourists, and travel without fear because he knows how to have a "mistake free" English conversation (From Xie's journal). Xie made an interesting comment when asked whether English will become a mark of social status. It will become a mark of distinction for job hunting, but not social status, he said. He

does not think English skills bring him status, and he said, “We won’t distinguish ourselves as Taiwanese with or without English language ability.” He later added that many jobs in Taiwan require English skills for workers and that company owners are learning English to talk to foreign clients. Indirectly, he admitted that knowing the English language is becoming a mark of social status.

In fact, participants thought the same thing about learning the English language—that obtaining English skills had given them a job to teach at elementary schools. Becoming an English teacher not only is giving them a stable job but also enhances their reputation. Wang added that those who do not teach English can work at foreign companies if they know English or other foreign languages. She said, “[B]ecause they usually get good pay in foreign companies.” According to Gao, if she loses her job at the school, she can become an English tutor or an instructor at a buxiban. She feels good about being able to speak to foreigners at her school, and her co-workers envy her English skills (From Gao’s journal). Gao thinks that English teaching is a “spoiled” job with lots of benefits and lots of respect from others.

Wang shared a different kind of ELE as a mark of distinction, when she complained about the MOE decision makers. She said that the policy of recruiting and training English language teachers was never fully developed because Taiwanese legislators constantly changes the policy. All the participants had followed different routes of English teaching preparation before they began teaching ELE at the elementary school level. Most went through the ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE. According to Teng (2003), 50,000 people took the English language proficiency test and oral exam in 1999, but only 3,000 passed. Due to the long process of training, many people gave up, so there are

only 1,900 certified English language teachers at the primary level. However, the MOE was supposed to distribute these English language teachers to different schools but made a change so that these teachers had to apply for jobs by themselves. Therefore, only 1,400 English teachers successfully found a teaching job in elementary schools. Wang confirmed Teng's statement, saying that her classmates obtained high levels of English language proficiency, but some quit in the middle of training because acquiring English language proficiency is one thing but teaching English to elementary students is another. Many of the would-be teachers returned to their former jobs. Therefore, Wang said that people actually gave her and others who went through the entire training process from 1999 through 2000 a nickname, "the 99s," because teachers such as Wang are certified not only to teach ELE to elementary students, but they also have obtained a higher level of English language ability than other teachers.

Wang said that this English teaching job is like a big pie, and everyone wants a piece of it. Some elementary school principals did not want to hire certified English language teachers because they want their own elementary teachers who are interested in teaching English to get certified in English teaching. Wang concerned that these teachers did not know how to teach English even they get certified.

Therefore, the MOE issued another policy to allow certified elementary teachers to take 20 credits of TESOL classes. These teachers do not need to go through any English language proficiency testing, and they can begin teaching English classes after they finish their training hours. Wang criticized this "20-credit crash course" because these teachers, he said, do not have an English language background, and the crash course is not sufficient for them to build up the capability to teach English. Wang admitted that she is good at speaking English, but that does not mean she can teach at the elementary level. So, she works on her

lesson plans and teaching skills. Therefore, she does not believe that teachers with no English language background can teach the English language.

Zhang said that the 20-credit crash course had received a great deal of criticism because whoever has a teaching certificate for the elementary level can teach the English language as long as they have 20 credit hours. Then, these teachers will return to their original schools to work. As an adviser in the local teacher organization, she has seen many of these teachers dare not teach or not know how to teach English. Therefore, the MOE again revised the policy, which took effect in 2011, to require teachers with certificates who are interested in teaching English to take 26 credits as well as take the English language proficiency test. Their teaching skills will also be evaluated. This initiative is called the “Elementary School Teachers with Specialty in ELE” (MOE, 2011). Zhang continued:

Nowadays, a lot of teachers’ English skills and teaching skills are doubted. So that policy is looking into both skills. Everyone is panicking now, but I have to say that only the qualified teachers will remain.

She lectures one of the required classes at the university, and she said that some elementary school teachers are not qualified to become English teachers. They cannot recognize English words or pronounce them correctly. For example, some people pronounce “scores” as “soccer,” and “wind up” (coil something) becomes “wind up” (wind blowing). “Can you believe it?” she asked. “There are a couple good teachers with good English abilities, but the rest are just . . . ough . . . I don’t know why they are in this class!” When asked why these teachers still want to be certified to teach English, since they do not have English language learning backgrounds, Zhang said that they want to prepare in advance for their second future specialty. Zhang was genuinely concerned about these “unprepared”

teachers' abilities to teach English to students at the elementary level, but they want to get certified because they understand the benefits of being able to teach English. These teachers consider English language skills as a form of cultural capital, which plays a central role in social power relations, provides the means of hierarchy, and distinguishes the dominant group from others through normal notions of taste and aesthetics. Bourdieu (1986) explains that the social order has made people accept social differences and hierarchies through cultural reproduction, including values, educational system, language, and methods of classification of one's life. Zhang thought that these elementary teachers who do not obtain English learning backgrounds want to get certified to teach ELE because they want to maintain their status as a dominant group.

Overall, obtaining English language proficiency gives participants not only a mark of social distinction, but it gives them a secure job. The secure job here is actually an issue derived from the low birth rate, and elementary teachers are forced to relocate to other schools, usually in rural areas. However, many teachers prefer teaching in cities, so they see English teaching as a guaranteed spot because each school hires one or two English language teachers who will not be relocated. However, it also brings up another issue about the lack of English teachers in rural areas. Schools have no one to hire, so they send their own teachers to be certified in English language teaching.

The process of learning the English language is the process of accumulating capital because capital provides access to scarce rewards, and students invest in education and internalize the dominant-class culture so that they can enter the dominant labor market (Lin, 1999). From Lin's viewpoint, to gain capital, students first must invest in the effort to learn the English language, to get high scores on the GEPT test as a reward, and to produce

academic credentials as economic capital for jobs. Therefore, English language skills are the cultural capital that eventually converts to social and economic advantages.

English language as a tool. As opposed to obtaining English skills to give participants status, I found that “English is a tool” appeared several times when participants shared issues of arrogant students in their classes, even though they noted that students’ English language levels differed. Students at advanced levels usually were hard to cope with because they already had learned English in buxibans and therefore become bored and sometimes disturbed classmates. These students, Chen said, seemed to think they were special and refused to help other students. She said these children may have learned basic English communicative skills, but they did not know how to live a group life and did not interact well with other students. Chen continued:

English is just a tool, a foreign language. Many parents pay too much attention to it, but English language is just a tool. Its importance depends on the type of job we have. Some jobs do not require English skills, but some do. However, the GEPT test scores do not represent students’ speaking skills in the English language.

Chen’s brother cannot speak English, but he was hired by a big company. She said, “I guess the company hired him because of his work experience, not based on his English skills.”

Hong shared the same opinion, saying:

English is seen as a tool for jobs, for survival, or for grades to pass classes. If people want to earn more money or get better jobs, they will invest money to learn English language. It is a tool to me, but people in Taiwan, especially parents, start to see it as a mark of status. They feel proud if their kids can speak English. They are in the

“well-bred” circle. I think it is just a way to expand the gap among social classes to maintain the hierarchy of the status.

He meant that Taiwanese people still must possess other professional skills to find jobs. Learning English only adds an extra skill. Our educational system still is testing students on their English language ability. However, test scores cannot represent students’ communication skills in English. Therefore, Hong thinks there is nothing special in an individual knowing English and that professional skills are more important.

Zhou said she has “arrogant” students who challenge her in class by saying they already have learned English in buxibans. These students laugh at others whose English pronunciation is not as precise. She has to interrupt their “arrogances” and tell them “because their parents have the money to give them chances to learn English earlier than other students, they do not have the right to use this skill against their classmates. They learned it, that’s good, but I still have to teach other students who never learn English before.” Zhou encourages students to learn as much English as possible, but she believes the students must use it as a tool in the right way, such as by introducing Taiwanese culture to foreigners in English, instead of laughing at classmates from groups with low-income backgrounds.

Wang said knowing English is important because it’s still the most widely used language worldwide. However, she said that “people should understand that English is A TOOL. They shouldn’t feel any superior because they still need other skills in order to find jobs, and English is a thing to support their professional skills. You need this tool to broaden your viewpoints (knowledge).” In her opinion, Taiwanese people should learn English as a tool along with their professions and should not use English language ability to create boundaries for others in Taiwan. Wang’s statement is problematic statement because she

already has seen different English abilities between the middle-class students and working-class students in her class. At her school, students are already placed into two different levels of English classes, based on their test grades. This tracking system allows some students with good English test scores to feel superior because they think they have learned English. Wang also talked about the phenomenon in Taiwan of worshipping English, so she understands that English is not “just” a tool, it is a form of hegemony of Anglo-Americans enforce. Anglo-Americans in this study refers to English-speaking Americans. According to Tsuda (2008), Anglo-Americans control the global market of products and entertainment. The United States has imported American cultural products such as movies, McDonald’s, and music into Japan. Tsuda claims that Anglo-Americans and globalization are connected in a way that places Anglo-Americans in the central position over peripheral countries in terms of their thoughts and English products. As we become willing to purchase American products, we are contributing to the perpetuation of the American political hierarchy and cultural dominance. Yet, we are helping not only the United States to reproduce the political hegemony, but we also are reproducing social inequality in Taiwan by promoting ELE in Taiwan. In order to cooperate with the Taiwanese government’s political strategy of internationalization, elementary school students start to learn English according to the ELE guidelines. The guidelines explain the necessity of learning English in Taiwan:

. . . English has become an important communication tool worldwide. Through learning English language, Taiwanese people are able to understand and respect socio-cultural activities in English-speaking countries. English learners are also able to use their English ability to prepare for life in the 21st century in terms of becoming a global citizen.

However, students of lower socioeconomic status are not considered in these guidelines because students from middle and higher status are sent to buxibans and learn more English than those of lower status. Students who learned English create a prejudiced and discriminating attitude toward those who do not learn English.

Huang said, “Connecting with other countries internationally sounds cliché, but the reality is Taiwanese government needs to use English language as a tool to promote our businesses and products.” She actually does not think English is as important as it was 10 years ago because more and more people are learning Mandarin to conduct business in China, and therefore she doubts that the English language will remain as dominant and powerful in the future. However, participants such as Wang, Zhou, and Zhang pointed out, English is still the most used language for business worldwide. Although students begin to learn English in elementary school, the Taiwanese educational system is based on students’ performance on tests. Meanwhile, ELE resources and learning hours are limited, so parents turn to buxibans for help if they can afford it. This is why students with greater English ability often think they are more significant or prestigious than students who have zero knowledge of ELE.

The next example is Li, who disagreed that people should feel superior based on their English language ability. The MOE identified the importance of the English language for internationalizing businesses with other countries, but it ignored one thing: The English language is a supplementary tool and Taiwanese people need professional skills for a job other than the ability to speak and write English. She used her friend as an example. Her friend is an accountant who works for an American company. Therefore, the friend needs to learn English to communicate with American clients. In this case, English is a tool

benefiting his job as an accountant. In Li's viewpoint, English remains a seldom-used language in Taiwan. She told me that students learn English to pass exams based only on a school requirement, but they communicate with parents in dialects or Mandarin. She further explained that Taiwan is not an English-speaking environment, and English is seen mainly as a tool for occupations. Li admitted that she had to take the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) when she looked for a teaching job. As people are obsessed with the benefits of higher education, English skills become the decisive factors to enter universities. To secure a stable job, one must obtain a degree in higher education and must learn English skills in Taiwan. Some 99% of business/investment company owners in Taiwan agree that the better English skills one acquires, the more opportunities such a person will have in finding a job and being given a pay raise (Lee, 2013).

However, Li also said, "I think our education is attending to the superficial and neglecting the essentials." She said the education system in Taiwan is a so-called crash course and that every subject is evaluated by grades. Students usually rush through coursework and the teacher-centered learning environment does not develop a student's abilities in critical thinking. English class is no exception and it has fallen into the high-stakes test area. At first, the purpose of ELE at the elementary level was to prepare Taiwanese students for the global market. However, when did English learning become a necessity for passing exams and a standard for finding a job or getting a promotion? This added role is just another level of stress for students who must prepare to take more high-stakes tests.

During individual interviews, participants said that the English language is a tool in Taiwan. Unlike in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, where people speak English as the

official language, Taiwanese people communicate with each other in Mandarin or a local dialect. Therefore, English has become a tool when people need it for a specific purpose, such as when working for foreign companies, international businesses, or the movie industry. As discussed, participants said English is a tool instead of a status symbol. English language performance in Taiwan provides valuable cultural capital and brings social benefits to participants. However, participants contradicted their own comments here because English is not “just” a tool to them: It also provides to them a superior status. They *do* feel good when treated differently because they can speak English, and others cannot. They also feel life becoming easier because they know English so that they do not need to rely on somebody to read it for them. Therefore, English is a status they receive due to their capital instead of “just” a tool they use.

According to Bourdieu (1986), *capital* means “accumulated labor which and when appropriated on a private, exclusive basis by agents or group of agents, enabled them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (p. 241). *Capital* represents three types: cultural, social and economic capitals. Three types are intertwined; economic capital is institutionalized money/property and it can convert into cultural capital, which often associates with academic qualification. An education credential can bring the individual a status. These teachers had cultural capital and economic capital that they revealed in contradictory ways, masking their structural advantages over working-class students and blaming them for failure to meet typical middle-class standards.

Parents. In the next two sections, I present participants’ views of how they see themselves related to colleagues at work and to parents at schools. Participants teach English as a subject in elementary school and they also are homeroom teachers, so they teach English

as well as other subjects. When asked about parents' attitudes toward ELE in their schools, all the teachers said that parents usually have a positive attitude. In particular, parents with higher education degrees show more enthusiasm but also tend to intervene in lectures. Xu said:

Parents are pretty much positive role models in terms of learning English. Some of them even aggressively went to our school principal, complained about classes being too easy for their kids. Our principal was trying to calm them down since we do follow MOE protocol to teach English. English classes in elementary level actually focus more on speaking and listening instead of writing and reading. Parents . . . uh . . . mostly middle- or higher-class, say their children have learned basic English. They wanted us to teach a middle school level of English language. They even wanted us to start putting more tests into English language classes because they want to see grades.

According to Xu, with higher education degrees, parents like to tell teachers how to teach even though they do not have educational backgrounds or ELE backgrounds. Parents “pretend” to know because they are influenced by mass media. For example, TV news and talk shows regularly point out that Taiwanese students' TOEFL scores are lower than those of students from other Asian countries. Therefore, parents want to see efficiency in ELE at school. Xu said that she needs to spend more time on students who have not learned English in buxibans. When she tried to explain this to parents with higher education, they threatened to pull their children out of her class. Xu stated that parents with higher education are too subjective to communicate and that when they annoy her by interrupting her teaching, she feels disrespected. She complained that parents are easily influenced by what the mass

media says on TV. She believes that parents at her school are manipulated by the media, and this is when the intervention starts. Huang said that teachers at her school are always open to communicate with parents regarding any problem. However, the well-educated parents would rather go to the county legislators and complain about the school. She wishes parents would meet with the school principal to work things out first. Zhang said that issues occur when parents do not like certain teachers or they want their children in the class of their favorite teacher. In order to place their children in favorite teachers' classes, middle-class or higher-class parents like to intervene in the procedure of class arrangement for teachers and students by arguing. Zhang described an incident in her school:

For example, a middle-class parent conveyed the desire of switching her child to a famous teacher's class, even that teacher's class was already full, but that student still got in. However, the student did not like this famous but strict teacher; he went home and told the parents that that teacher gave him a hard time at school. The mother filed a complaint regarding this "incompetent" teacher to the school principal. Hmm . . . this teacher is not incompetent, but just . . . strict on students' homework.

Zhang said that middle-class parents usually earned degrees in higher education, so they regard themselves at the same status as school teachers. However, parents' interventions can backfire and lead to student anxiety and misdemeanors (Lareau, 2000).

Li had the same feeling when she taught a gifted class at her current school. Students' English language levels in the gifted class were equally good, so the class was moving on easily, but the parents were difficult to communicate with. These parents were mostly from the middle and upper class and they usually had earned college degrees. Therefore, they thought they understood education well, and they usually had a lot to say about school

homework. Li said that the parents did not like the homework she gave students because they judged it as either too much or too time consuming. She said these parents would rather send their children to buxibans for English language and other subjects because buxibans have integrated curricula for elementary schools as well as for middle schools. Li continued, “Middle- and upper-class parents care nothing about elementary education because they believe in the buxiban system. If kids don’t do well at school, buxiban can save their kids.” This is why Li felt disrespected by students in her gifted class. The students already had learned everything in buxibans, and they did not want to listen to her lecture. Meanwhile, the parents did not trust her as both a homeroom and English language teacher.

As for working-class parents who have not received much education, they are not capable of spending money on education, and they will follow what the middle-class does by sending their children to English-language buxibans or by working with English language teachers to obtain resources, but only when parents believe in achievement ideology.

This is when Yu and Xu made a similar comment about fishermen making more money than teachers and therefore invest in ELE for their children. Yu described a similar experience with parents when she said, “I have to tell you that those fishermen are rich, but people look down on their jobs. They are actually having no economic problems.” Her comment echoes what Xu mentioned in the social mobility section about parents who own a fishery business but have no financial problems and do care about their children’s education. Yu and Xu did not consider that their privilege of being English language teachers is better than fishermen with limited educational credentials. Fishermen may earn more than teachers, but the income is not as stable as it is for school teachers because working in a fishery is a risky job. Furthermore, these English teachers have earned college degrees, which give them

other job opportunities beyond teaching. Yu and Xu carried an ambivalent attitude when talking about fishermen's families, especially when they acknowledged obstacles for the working class; they still blame students and families for lack of schooling success. They seemed to defend their positions as middle-class English teachers by transferring the focus of analysis onto working-class parents' incomes.

Ke said that these parents are willing to spend money on children's ELE because they cannot teach on their own. Ke said that parents' socioeconomic backgrounds influence children's educational choices, especially financial considerations, when it comes to investing in English language learning. Therefore, working-class parents who spend money on ELE form a small part of my research field. McNamee and Miller (2014) believe that meritocracy is built on the premise that some people are capable of gaining access to social mobility regardless of their backgrounds. In Taiwan, tests still are used to govern access to education and employment, so parents are willing to invest money to help children pass the school's gatekeeping function.

Li felt a different kind of frustration when communicating with working-class parents because they usually work away from home while grandparents frequently take care of everything. She said:

When I called the parents, they weren't at home. They are busy working. But I think whether parents are busy working or not, if they still care about education, they still spend time working with kids. Most parents in my class don't care about education. The environment they live in is like this. It's not necessary to receive education since their jobs won't require a lot of education.

These parents did not receive much education, Li said, and they think their children can inherit the family business so these children also do not need much education. Li was not the only teacher who faced conflicts when communicating with parents in the middle/upper and working classes. Some teachers complained that educated parents are overpowering school teachers and that working-class parents are just the opposite, leaving all schooling responsibility to teachers.

Hong shared a similar opinion:

Uh . . . many working-class parents are usually busy working, so they leave the responsibility to the school teachers. They rarely ask questions about ELE. Only when their kids get into trouble, they call me. Otherwise, they are OK for those English language events at school, but they rarely participate. I am not sure if the working class are playing the negative role toward ELE. I only have a couple of parents from “rich” families who like to talk to me regarding their kid’s learning attitude toward ELE. But they try not to intervene in my teaching . . . somewhat positive!

As usual, Gao was cautious about sharing her opinions during the interviews. She often reminded me of the different backgrounds between herself and her students:

Mmm . . . ha ha . . . I don’t quite know how to answer this question since my school is located in such a rural area and most parents are working class. I mean . . . it is really different from where I live in the city. Parents here are usually busy working, and grandparents have to take care of the children. Grandparents know nothing about education, and it is hard to ask them to help me in English classes. Only one or two

students are from the middle class. Their parents are usually willing to help when we have English language events come up.

Gao once gave DVDs to students and had them practice English at home. She had to call parents or grandparents to explain the purpose of DVDs, but parents (grandparents) asked only about their children's behaviors at school. It seemed to Gao that working-class parents do not care much about students' grades but rather more about discipline at school. She felt frustrated because she did not get much support from the parents of her ELE students.

Lin also shared her experience of communicating with parents. She encountered a similar situation at her school:

We have many students whose parents are working in the fishing industry. Compared to public servants here, working-class children's performances may not be as good as kids from the middle class. Yes, we will pay close attention to these kids. The working class may not have financial problems, but parents are busy working. They can't care much about their children's learning. I don't get a lot of working-class parents coming to me and asking about their children's performance in classes. Maybe they don't care, or they care, they just don't know what to do. Mostly, parents around here think that obtaining professional skills [such as mechanical, fishing skills, business skills in grocery stores, or cooking skills] are better than speaking English language since those skills don't have to require English ability. Working-class parents have different viewpoints of education other than teachers or public servants. Working-class parents care more about children's behaviors rather than grades. Well . . . then . . . teachers have nothing to do with it. These kids are going into vocational schools to learn some practical skills, so they don't need to focus on ELE.

According to Lin, while middle-class parents cared too much about their children's English language skills and asked all sorts of questions about which buxibans they should go to or which English summer camps they should attend, working-class parents cared more about children's manners than about their grades.

One's social status causes a different level of conflict between teachers and parents. Based on participants' experience of working with middle-class and working-class parents, all participants feel their autonomy challenged by middle-class parents and blame working-class parents for not taking care of their children's education. According to Lareau (2000), upper middle-class parents complain about teachers' ability to teach the curriculum. They often criticize teachers' decisions, qualifications, and judgment, but they are enthusiastic about participating in school events and volunteer programs. School staff and teachers like parents' support but only when it is the type of support that they want.

On the contrary, Lareau (2000) contends that working-class parents rarely complain to school, except about discipline, and leave the responsibility for teaching to the teachers. This is mainly because working-class parents do not have the cultural capital to know how to work the system of schooling in their favor. Teachers of working-class students think that parents are not supportive of education and of teachers' effort in the classroom. Therefore, teachers tend to blame parents for students' academic failure. A family's social class influences parents' efforts to tailor their children's education: working-class parents leave the responsibility for education to schools and rely on teachers to provide an equitable education for their children whereas middle-class parents intervene and try to customize classroom activities to meet their children's needs. Furthermore, middle-class parents see school teachers as equals instead of superior because the parents earned college degrees like the

teachers did, and these parents know how to fight for their children and are not intimidated by the schools.

This section of my findings shows that middle-/upper class parents show a positive attitude toward ELE because they want to gain cultural capital to maintain their social status, but working-class parents who invest money in their children's ELE see the English language as an asset of social mobility for moving between socioeconomic classes.

These English language teachers discussed their attitude toward ELE and their feelings about English language ability in Taiwan. Participants explained that the new educational system is complicated and that some parents may not understand it. Therefore, anxious parents will begin to prepare their children for high school and higher education applications before elementary school by sending them to buxibans to learn English painting, or piano, for example, just in case they need these talents for extra credit to be admitted to ideal schools in the future. Especially for English education, many children start to study when they are 3 years old, and some buxibans become day-care centers with whole-language or bilingual programs. Middle-class parents make a distinction for their children from the working class by comparing their children's English ability.

According to participants, middle-class parents tend to intervene in English lessons more than the working class. The middle-class student usually receives a college degree, so middle-class people think they have the same educational background as elementary English language teachers. Therefore, these parents request specific content to be taught and even ask teachers to teach English proficiency tests, such as GEPT at their elementary school, just like the buxibans do. Furthermore, parents will ask teachers to teach more advanced English because their children have learned in buxibans, and parents disregard other students who

never learned English. In contrast to middle-class parents' enthusiasm toward ELE, working-class parents tend to be followers of school English language teachers or middle-class parents. Participants explained that working-class parents work long hours, are hard to contact, and usually leave their children to grandparents who do not know anything about ELE. Also, working-class parents tend to show more respect to participants. As Lareau (2000) stated, upper middle-class parents may have the same status as school teachers, and some may have higher social and economic status than teachers. These parents' higher educational background and social position influence their belief of their role in their children's schools. They believe it is their responsibility to be leaders in education, and they believe they know how to teach better than school teachers. In contrast, working-class parents look up to teachers because these parents have less education and feel financial pressure, so they tend to transfer responsibility for their children's education to school teachers. Also, according to participants, unlike middle-class parents, who like to intervene in teachers' jobs, working-class parents ask for help from English language teachers regarding homework. From Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, students who obtain more cultural capital have more opportunities to succeed in education.

Receiving an education allows an individual to grasp the taste and habitus of the upper middle-class and to fit easily into the system. Under the educational stratification in Taiwan, ELE is viewed as cultural capital, and whether students will obtain it depends on their parents' economic and social status, as well as on the distribution of educational resources.

Colleagues. Xu had taught in the big city, and all she remembered were lots of English resources to access and many reading, speech, and spelling competitions. She was

constantly preparing English language materials for students, she said. There was no time to communicate with other teachers, and everyone worked independently, hardly ever together. Her current school is in an urban township, has fewer resources, and the principal is not as enthusiastic about ELE as her previous principal. She and another English language teacher must find materials themselves. Xu also realizes that colleagues in her current school see English language teachers differently. She said, “I have colleagues say that we English teachers are so famous that they think we are superior to others.” She said she sees English language skills as her profession of teaching, not her status. According to Xu, the atmosphere of ELE is different in cities and in townships. In her previous school, she said that it was common to see foreigners, so learning English became common sense. The need for English language teachers in cities is greater than in townships.

However, she does not think her English ability makes her superior to her co-workers. In her journal, she said she is good at the English language and always gets high scores on English language tests, so she was able to pass the test to prepare for the ELE teacher program. She also can travel to different countries without a tour guide because she is able to communicate in English with foreigners.

Zhou has a similar experience at her current school. She said:

I do have colleagues telling me that we English teachers are so different from other teachers. I was like . . . why? They said that English ability gives us a special power and different backgrounds at school. I denied what I heard because I think we are all the same!

She was from a working-class family, and her parents grew farm crops for a landlord. Zhou claims that she paid her own way to be certified as an English language teacher, so she seems

unhappy when her colleagues see her English skills as a special power. Asked whether her co-workers have seen her “special power,” Zhou shook her head and said:

No, no, no. . . . I am just a teacher who knows how to teach English. This won't differ from teachers of other subjects at my school. Being an English language teacher is not a big deal. I am teaching basic English at elementary level, basic, you know, simple, ha ha ha. . . .

She sees the English language as a tool that has given her benefits that her co-workers have not obtained. She denied the fact that obtaining the merit of English ability does makes her feel different from other school colleagues. In her journal and interviews, Zhou said that having English skills gives her a teaching job, allows her to travel outside Taiwan with confidence, and lets her translate for friends/family who do not know English.

The next example comes from Zhang, who did not hesitate to share her good feelings about her English language skills. She said:

Social status . . . hmm . . . at least we are civilized, ha ha. . . . Within school, at some levels . . . I feel good because I am willing to learn some new stuff. Maybe because I am younger than most teachers, I am not afraid of accepting new stuff. [Outside school,] OK, we probably care about salary, ha ha ha. We don't really pay attention to our status, and bread comes first, not status (Zhang's journal).

Each year, English teachers are required to attend workshops to learn approaches to teaching English. ELE is new to Taiwan's elementary schools in the past 10 years. Compared to others who do not like to make changes in teaching techniques, Zhang likes to gain new knowledge of ELE.

Although she is teaching in the capital city of the southern county, the school is considered a rural elementary school. She feels that colleagues see her position differently, and she accepts it because her English ability means her job is secure, and she is needed by others. Zhang pointed out that the zeal in rural areas for learning English is not as great as it is in big cities because decision makers and teachers may be afraid to change teaching methods of ELE. This might be why ELE in rural areas lags behind that in urban areas.

Huang also had good feelings about being needed by her colleagues, but she said she does not feel any different from her co-workers. She gets along with them peacefully, she said. Huang taught English in a northern city, and her situation was like Xu's. She was always busy preparing students for competitions. She claims that she was able to secure resources effortlessly. After she moved to her current school, where she has fewer resources, she began to feel that the smaller school is better because she and another teacher are the only two English language teachers at that school, and it is easier to communicate with the school principal regarding ELE needs.

During our interview, she had just finished a training class for cloud computing with her colleagues at school. The software was in English, and she had no problem navigating it while her colleagues struggled to understand each step. In the end, she became an assistant in the training class to help her co-workers. She was all smiles because she was happy to be needed.

However, Xie shared his different experience when teaching in the current school. He said:

I think people have a fantasy about English language because we know English more than others, not [because] we are teachers. Here, people see me as a teacher who

teaches the English language. They are fascinated by the language because they know nothing about this language. It's a foreign.

Xie tried to eliminate the phenomenon of worshipping the English language in Taiwan. His colleagues are not fascinated by the "foreign" language he speaks; they are envious of Xie's English skills, which have brought him the higher reputation.

Xie and another colleague face a dilemma: They want to create an English-speaking environment, but the school principal and administrators want them to focus on students' grades. He feels frustrated because decision makers at his school do not understand what he wants. He and his colleague even have to fight for ELE materials. His school is located at the edge of an urban township, and the principal seems unenthusiastic about promoting ELE. Xie has a lot of confidence in his English ability, and he said, "Well, when I need to use it, I feel different. When I don't have to use English, then I am the same as other regular elementary teachers. I mean, if my colleagues need my help, I feel different from my co-workers."

Unlike Xie, Hong works in a school that has more English language teachers, and thus, the school principal is able to work with them regarding materials for ELE. He admitted that the trend of English language learning has gained a great deal of attention and, as an English language teacher, he says he does not feel superior to other teachers. He feels that people see him from a higher viewpoint than others.

When the participants were asked about their relationship with colleagues, they said they felt awkward for speaking ill behind their co-workers' backs. They said that my interview question was hard to answer. They wanted me to understand that they did not have any argument with their colleagues. The manner of these English language teachers'

explanation of their relationships with co-workers seemed low profile, but as they talked about the benefits of acquiring English language skills, they revealed the differences between themselves and other colleagues. They also minimized their co-workers' claim that they possessed a higher status because they spoke English. Chapter 5 describes how these findings contribute to ELE in the Asian EFL context and presents the implications of this dissertation study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this study, I examined how ELE as cultural capital has influenced participants' social status in Taiwan. When I initially interviewed the participants, they were surprised I did not ask about their teaching techniques in English classrooms. But, I instead focused on the popular trend of ELE. The purpose of this study is not to tell Taiwanese people to resist learning English, but rather it is to understand that skills in the English language, and the manner in which it is performed, become a mark of social distinction in Taiwan. The purpose of this study is to challenge the reality that Taiwanese policymakers take the hegemony of English for granted, to convince people to accept it as inevitable and beneficial, and then to reproduce the social classes.

Relying on Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, I conducted a qualitative study that included interviews, journal writing, and a focus group to support my findings. I will now discuss my findings in relation to each research question.

Research Questions

1. How does the discourse of these participants reveal their understanding of social meaning of ELE in Taiwan?

Because it is a periphery English speaking country, the residents of Taiwan do not own adequate infrastructure to teach the English language, and under the stress of U.S. political hegemony, we must learn English teaching pedagogies from the United States. While the Taiwanese government promotes English, it actually is creating cultural capital, and thus a class hierarchy, by using ELE. The English language policy seeks to enhance students' communication skills in English, but the Ministry of Education (MOE) is not developing the assessment to evaluate elementary students' English language ability. Instead,

more tests are given that focus on writing and reading skills. Anything in the English language, such as proficiency tests and competitions, can translate into extra credits for applications of entrance into high school and a university.

Because of the MOE's decentralized power, each local government has a different understanding of English language education, which means Taiwan's English language policy actually becomes "one nation, multiple systems." It seems that the autonomy of local governments is not helping students in rural areas learn English and that the current arrangement, therefore, perpetuates the status. The findings of this study show that ELE under the new credential system is supposed to give lower-class students a chance to learn with children from middle and upper classes, but the new educational system actually draws students away from the hope of boosting their social mobility through education. Students must acquire more cultural capital if they want to fit into the credential system, and parents must spend more money sending children to buxibans to gain access for their children in the Taiwanese educational system. Taiwan's English language policy is making English languages kills a status symbol. Although participants say that not every job requires English language ability, the skill is an advantage for school applications and for graduation requirements at a university. English language ability can be one of the extra points that can make a positive difference when one applies for admission to a school. Therefore, some middle-class children begin learning English in buxibans at the age of 5. This helps them stand out academically and can prepare them to represent their schools to compete in English language competitions. These students' applications will be stronger than some other students. Students will have to take the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) or other English language proficiency tests, whether they need it or not, to graduate. Clearly, the

English language is becoming a gear wheel in one's education, an enhancement of career opportunities, and a selective tool for social mobility (Sergeant, 2009).

According to participants, the English language policy does not generalize ELE to students living in rural areas. On the contrary, like the reforms of the educational system in Taiwan, ELE is used as a tool to sell achievement ideology and to maintain class hierarchy. As I reviewed the policy of ELE on the MOE website, the purpose of introducing ELE at the elementary level is to cultivate English-speaking Taiwanese children in order to compete in the global market. In this way, ELE will be available to each elementary student in Taiwan, especially to those who do not have an opportunity to attend English buxibans. Among participant discourses, Taiwanese people continue to buy into achievement ideology and believe the educational system is fair, in which everyone shares an equal opportunity to receive ELE. But, there is no equality in this system. Middle-class parents already are sending their children to ELE buxibans before third grade, which means that by the time these middle-class children become third graders, they have learned a great deal of English at the elementary level.

Having both middle-class and working-class students in one class challenges school administrators and teachers with their lesson planning and class management. Schools, such as Wang and Li's, must separate students into two classes: one at a beginner level and another at an advanced level. The students' scores on English tests are used to determine the level of class each student will be placed in. In this way, teachers might be able to focus their lessons at the level of the students' abilities. But, it looks like the schools continue to use a tracking system. Zhou said that English teachers are supposed to use CLT technique to improve students' speaking ability in the English class, but her school focuses more on paper-

written tests instead of on English-speaking assessment. Zhou is not alone. Xie shared the same doubt, and this shows that there is a disconnect between the language policy and reality. Both Zhou and Li described the language policy is “superficial” and that it attempts to make people believe the importance of English language without looking into the reality: English teachers have difficulties trying to incorporate CLT with their lesson plans, especially when they have a large number of students who have little or no knowledge of English. This raises the issue of limited ELE resources in rural schools. An agenda to limit the differences of the education resources between urban areas and rural areas is always one of the main points, but the situation stays the same, which means the educational system perpetuates the hierarchy between urban areas and rural areas. Participants shared their different teaching experience in both areas, and compared to the teaching experience in rural schools. They had greater access to ELE resources, and middle-class children in the bigger cities had more opportunities to use English, i.e., attending English summer camps, and these kind of activities are seldom held in rural areas.

During a discussion during a focus-group interview, Gao said ELE has become a key to the process of social mobility. Like ELE in South Korea, with the increasing social and economic rewards of knowing the English language (Seo, 2010), English performance has become an extra requirement for admission to universities and a prerequisite for graduating from a university. While Li was preparing her children to take GEPT test, Gao’s friend delayed his graduation because of failing of GEPT test. Participants shared their experiences to explain that ELE plays a role to maintaining one’s social class; the language policy of pushing ELE down to elementary level is to have people buy into the discourse that everyone should start at the same starting line. What participants conveyed is echoed in Anyon’s

(2014) work on the relationship between policy, social, and economic inequalities: that school reform is failing because the decision makers do not realize that government policies maintain and reproduce the class structure in cities.

2. How do English speaking Taiwanese educators position themselves relative to others as they discuss English language education in Taiwan? Do they see their English ability as a mark of social distinction?

This research has shown that participants contradicted their statements in interviews and in journal writings about the role that ELE plays of reproducing social class. During face-to-face interviews, participants were reluctant to answer directly questions about being different, as English teachers, from others. However, they did not deny that people see them as “smart,” because they teach English, which is seen as a high-class job and therefore a position of status. Participants’ colleagues envy their ability to teach English, and this ability represents superiority and special power. Furthermore, in their journals, these participants revealed feelings about learning English skills. They have “good feelings” about obtaining English language skills because such skills help them acquire a teaching job and contribute to the likelihood of a comfortable standard of living. Participants shared their experiences of traveling to other nations and said they were treated differently as visitors because they could communicate with foreigners in English. Also, in Taiwan, they feel pride when people come to them to ask about products whose packaging is written in English.

Although participants told me that some jobs do not require English skills, these participants could not deny that people who apply for white-collar jobs must have English skills and that English becomes part of one’s image. Therefore, participants see English proficiency as a key not only to social mobility but also to procuring badges of elegance and

nobility. As I analyzed transcripts, I found that participants contradicted themselves during interviews. Unlike a purely qualitative descriptive method, phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretive. The phenomenological method studies participants' various experiences through an interpretation of their perceptions, emotions, desires, and social activities. The method is used to look into an individual's consciousness of a phenomenon and beyond, that is, into their unconsciousness of phenomena. Critical hermeneutics is used to discover the contradiction among participants' problematic discourses (Porter & Robinson, 2011). In the case of my participants, their discourse became problematic when they instrumentally rationalized ELE as a status. Based on their transcripts, participants showed emotions of defensiveness and unpleasantness when contradictions were brought to light, which implicated themselves when they talked about their English ability bringing them status. For example, Xie denied that English language ability represents class. When I asked whether he has gained status from his English skills, he said, "No, English cannot be used as status, because English language is just a tool." However, he mentioned in his journal that he felt superior to colleagues who do not speak English at school, and this shows that obtaining English language skills gives him a sense of superiority.

Participants were defensive when they shared their educational experience and their working-class students' English language ability. Most participants finished high school and higher education in big cities. Many of them were born in rural townships that lacked educational resources, so they had no choice but to go to big cities for schooling. "It was my parents' decision," they said. Their parents understood that social mobility is based on education. As long as their children were able to pass the National Entrance Examinations

for higher education, it was conceivable that they could climb the social class ladder. Therefore, participants already knew how the hierarchy of the system works. When I asked whether they had been left out when attending schools in big cities, they denied right away and said they focused only on studying. But later, they confirmed that there are differences between urban students and those like themselves who came from rural townships. Urban students were already ahead, and the only thing rural students could do was to study hard, pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, to become a member of the urban group.

The ELE teachers in this study understand and buy into the achievement ideology, and they believe that education is the main key to social mobility; that is, schooling and ELE do not reinforce inequality. This is the reason participants often say to students that if they do not learn English, they cannot pass the class or find jobs. These teachers ignore the fact that “success” depends not just on merit. Students of higher social status already own cultural capital, which allows them to gain more access to educational resources and credentials than students of lower social status.

Meanwhile, the myth of meritocracy is deeply rooted in the Taiwanese social system. Meritocracy refers to a social system where individuals get ahead on the basis of merit and hard work. But other than merit, family background plays a big part in meritocracy, such as money and networks that individuals inherit from their parents. Children from more privileged backgrounds are already ahead when they were born. On the contrary, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are behind, and the gap tends to persist through adulthood (McNamee & Miller, 2014). The meritocracy myth here means an ideology that participants believe the system of inequality is fair because everyone starts with an equal chance under the standards of meritocracy. Education is a fair and just competition, so

everyone has an equal chance at success. Therefore, participants believe students should be able to learn English well because ELE is implemented as a compulsory course in elementary schools: Every student starts learning English at the same time.

During individual interviews, these English teachers often conveyed a message about their teaching attitude, which is summed up by saying that “they don’t see children from different class, but they only see children.” However, they contradicted themselves because participants could easily discern students’ social backgrounds by their English language skills. Participants also complained that working-class parents are hard to work with because they do not help their children with ELE. Then, in a tactic to mask their guilt and contradiction, they made absurd claims such as saying that working-class parents, such as fishermen, are rich and earn more than elementary English teachers, even though they do not know English, and that working-class parents have adequate money to figure out a way for their children to receive ELE.

Participants’ comments make me wonder whether they are blind about class inequality or if they are clear about what happens in a hierarchical education system. As members of the dominant group, participants have the knowledge to manipulate what opinions they would like to share and to repress certain forms of knowledge to remain seemingly ignorant of problematic issues in ELE. Participants confirmed that it is easier to teach gifted students and/or students with some English skills than to teach working-class students. It is clear from this study that participants are invested in a hegemonic ideology of ELE and the achievement ideology, which they learned as positioned actors in the Taiwanese social structure.

Ideology is the system of ideas and values that the dominant group has developed to satisfy what they believe are their needs and desires. As individuals live in society, we learn how the social structure works, and we recognize things that influence our lives, such as the powerful people we want to meet, the dominant group we want to belong to, and the resources we want to access. Ideology is described as the persuasive and hegemonic ideas that have been accepted by the powerful groups as a part of “commonsense” in their lives (Geuss, 1981). According to Hall (1982), the mass media reinforces values and norms that most people in the dominant group already have achieved. The social role of the media not only delivers the ruling ideas but also reproduces capital and the existing social structures. The media is biased in its control of meaning about a society, and the ruling class uses the media to distribute their ideologies. The media controls content and conveys implied meanings to individuals about what social and cultural norms we should believe. As members in this society, dominant groups at school instill in us a set of cultural beliefs, and the media dictates what we see. And, as such, the dominant ideology lives in the repressed parts of our minds and language.

Geuss (1981) states that a critique of ideology is not to judge an individual for being nasty or immoral but for having incorrect beliefs about what exists. The ruling class affects social reproduction by manifesting its ideologies to each socio-economic level; therefore, their political, economic, and social interests are imposed, consciously and unconsciously, as the interests of the entire society. In this way, the ruling elite are able to legitimize meritocracy in Taiwan through coercion and seduction (e.g., in desiring English language as a social status). The elite in this context are a small group of people from the ruling class who have earned higher credentials and attain higher social status, and they are policy experts in

support of the MOE decision makers on educational reforms, in which they assert that anyone can attain elite status if they possess talent and meet criteria called for on applications to academic institutions.

The English teachers I interviewed have immersed themselves into the achievement ideology, and they benefit from the status quo, which means they are less likely to challenge the existing system. Even though the stories they tell show how they receive privilege for knowing and teaching English, they deny, when pushed, that their status has brought them privilege and consider achievement ideology as merely the product of good effort, saying, “That’s the way it is.” I am uncertain about what they say. After all, if we all believe in achievement ideology and we work hard, if fishermen and farmers are rich, and if the educational reforms are meant to help disadvantaged children learn ELE and receive higher education, then why do so many Taiwanese children from the lower class fail in school? Should we blame the students and say they are not intelligent, or should we blame working-class parents and say they have given no effort in trying to help their children? Or should we educators admit that our achievement ideology has failed to recognize that disadvantaged students do not inherit the social, cultural, and economic capital as that students from privileged classes did? Or does the high status group’s activity construct new marks of distinction to perpetuate their dominant status? With participants’ comments above, I look back at Bourdieu’s social class reproduction. Bourdieu (1984) asserts that schools are instruments of social and cultural reproduction. Schools do not produce cultural capital but instead recognize it and reward those who possess it, as a kind of marketplace where value is assigned. Children of lower status and holding less cultural capital will be eliminated from the system, or they will self-eliminate when they realize that simply due to the status into

which they were born, they have a diminished chance to succeed in the system (McNamee & Miller, 2014).

Contribution & Implications

Contribution. The contribution of this study fills a gap of literature in the field of reproduction of cultural capital studies. This study provides an insight into how ELE becomes a mark of social distinction in Taiwan. Despite an increasing number of studies of ELE methods, beginning in kindergarten and continuing to higher education, few studies look at how ELE impacts one's social and economic status in the English language classroom in Taiwan. An individual's English language proficiency is heavily influenced by the government's attitude toward the role of the English language in society as well as by the process for implementing those decisions in Taiwan's educational system (Jung & Norton, 2002).

In terms of contributing to English language policy in Taiwan, this study shows the policy reifies ELE as cultural capital that reinforces class hierarchy. It is also important to note that ELE creates a hierarchical status between other Asian countries when the MOE consistently compares English test scores with scores in countries nearby. This imposes internationalized senses of self-based on perceptions of relative English language power, which likely manifests in feelings of superiority and inferiority. The MOE policymakers are from the dominant and advantaged group, so the policy they created definitely benefits and maintains the status of the dominant group in Taiwan. In 2002, Taiwan's government issued a policy statement, *Challenge 2008: National Development Plan (2002-2007)*. Its purpose was to enhance Taiwan's internationalization, including its economy and technology

(Executive Yuan, 2003). One of the subplans was to achieve internationalization in the English proficiency of Taiwan's citizens.

The intent of the plan was not only to create an English speaking environment but also to reduce the gap between rural and urban English educational resources. However, the findings of my study show that creating an English speaking environment in rural townships is unrealistic because most working-class parents do not understand English, and their children often rely on English teachers' help at schools. Furthermore, children usually speak a mother tongue, such as Mandarin, Taiwanese, or an Indigenous dialect with their parents, but children learn English as a foreign language, and some use it for their occupations. Participants said that addressing the inequitable distribution of English education resources between urban and rural schools in the National Development Plan has not occurred. These English teachers had teaching experience in cities as well as in rural townships, which means the participants realized there were fewer ELE resources in rural townships than in cities. Participants seemed to believe that the Taiwanese government implements ELE because the nation's citizens are under the pressure of political hegemony from the United States. So, while they were critical of the United States, they were uncritical of their own positionality.

Policymakers devise plans and try to convince citizens to learn English by using the strategy of achievement ideology. Under the stress of meritocracy, students reconceptualize English as the ticket to the elite league, which means students need an English grade to apply for schools, to graduate from universities, and to gain more opportunities for job hunting. The hegemony of English is never questioned, and participants revealed that obtaining English skills for Taiwanese people means that the citizens of Taiwan are gaining the ability to compete in today's global economy. Participants cannot afford to not learn English, nor

can their students. But, will we learn to speak English to the satisfaction of the American government or will we prove our ranking in the court of economic competition worldwide by speaking and learning English?

Lin (2003) explains that Taiwan and the United States have maintained a close relationship since World War II through the Korean War and Cold War eras. From 1949 to 1965, the United States offered support to the Taiwanese government in the political and economic arenas, and because of this unique relationship, the Taiwanese people were not colonized by the United States. Historically, the Taiwanese society, as well as its culture, economy, and education, were deeply influenced by American culture. After the government relocated to Taiwan in 1949, the Council for U.S. Aid (CUSA) in Taiwan established a center of ELE to teach college students who had the potential to go abroad for further study in the United States. Many scholars, educators, and politicians received their higher education in the United States. Therefore, English has represented a higher socio-economic status since then. Not only that, the media, including radio, TV, and movie theaters, broadcast American English shows. Those are among the factors that have convinced the Taiwanese people that learning English is the path to increased economic competitiveness.

Instead of focusing on English teaching methods, this study attempts to help English teachers understand that ELE is a powerful force that will impact students economically and socially. The school is a place in which students are taught to accept dominant values and beliefs in order to reinforce the existing inequalities by educating students according to their social class. Therefore, in addition to learning ELE teaching methods, educators should develop critical thinking toward ELE regarding how ELE will influence students' status.

Implications. The implications of this study consist of eliminating the misleading purpose of learning English language, providing a consistent language policy, giving English teachers more autonomy with textbook selection, and solving the gap of English resources between rural and urban schools. The Taiwanese government considers English language learning as a process that will enhance national competence so that it is on par, or nearly on par, with other countries. It is necessary for Taiwanese people to learn English communication skills so that they can meet the needs of globalization and the demands of information technology (MOE, 2001). The decision makers believe acquiring English language skills will increase the image of the nation.

In an ELE policy white paper, the Taiwanese MOE likes to use slogans such as “English language skill is the competitive ability” or “Learning English language is becoming internationalized or globalized.” However, does English language ability translate to national competence and internationalization? Zhou states:

I think “learning English equals internationalization” is misleading Taiwanese people. It’s not quite right. English is not the only thing that causes internationalization, but other thoughts like to learn different cultures from other countries except American, professional skills . . . You learn English well, but that doesn’t mean you obtain global perspectives.

Participants argued that individuals can get a job even if their English skills are limited, but they did not deny that English language ability is becoming a status symbol. If one does not pass English language proficiency tests, they may not graduate from a university or find employment in the company of their choice. However, does one’s English language ability give one the skills necessary to be competitive in the worldwide marketplace? Or do

Taiwanese people learn English because we worship American education and culture? Or do we use the English language as a tool to show off our status to one another?

According to participants, we learn English language as a “tool,” which, according to them, cannot represent any competitive ability. But, then they also say that we must learn professional skills to compete with people worldwide, and English is a vital component of our professional skills. This contradiction reveals an investment in their social location as ELE speakers and teachers.

As I interviewed these teachers, they talked a lot about the English language policy not being consistent and that it changed frequently. Originally, ELE was started at the fifth-grade level in 2001, but many schools in cities were teaching it to third graders. To make sure ELE started at the same grade, the MOE announced a revision to start ELE in the third grade in 2005. However, each city and county had different times for starting ELE, and sometimes even in the same county schools began the program in different grades. Participants told me that the MOE would push ELE down to first grade in 2012 to help children of working-class families who were unable to send their children to English language buxibans. That, however, only increased parents’ panic about ELE. Before the educational system reformed, parents usually sent their children to English language buxibans at fifth or sixth grade before entering the middle school. After ELE was pushed down to fifth grade, students attended buxibans around first grade. Now, if ELE begins at the first-grade level, students need to attend a buxiban during kindergarten. In this way, those with more cultural and economic capital are able to stay one step ahead of policy efforts to level the playing field by starting their children earlier and earlier than what the government mandates.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Taiwanese parents fear their children are falling behind, so they like to prepare in advance for their children's ELE. Parents living in rural areas always look up to families in big cities, especially working-class parents who do not know the English language. They usually rely on buxibans, which will be a financial burden for working-class families. Although Xie is hoping the school will add ELE to first grade, he thinks this is the only way for kids in this particular township to catch up to children who live in cities. However, Wang and Gao also worry about how ELE may influence students' Chinese language learning. Wang says that most kids speak their mother tongue at home, and they start to learn Chinese in kindergarten or wait until elementary school. First graders are just about to learn Chinese pronunciation and characters; if they do not build their Chinese language skills, how will they learn English well? Therefore, the implication is to hope the MOE does an experiment before implementing the revision of policy. Yet the policy does not fit the reality, especially in rural areas. Schools in rural areas should be selected to experiment with teaching ELE in first grade and see how it works before the policy is adopted throughout Taiwan. By doing that, we can predict issues and modify the policy to avoid revising the policy so many times that it would panic teachers and parents.

Another implication relates to centralizing the power of the MOE, because the ELE scenario is confusing, especially with the different versions of curricula and different qualifications of English teachers. In the past, the National Institution for Compilation and Translation monopolized the market of textbooks, and everyone used the same curricula. After the reform of the educational system, teachers were permitted to choose their curricula and to be more creative in designing lessons; in this way, the teachers make students more

aware of events in society. This includes teachers encouraging students to interact more in their English classes.

According to the MOE, each school is required to form a Curriculum Development Committee, which would include a panel for each of the seven learning areas. The committee's task is to prepare a curriculum plan, which then would be submitted to the local education bureau. The plan outlines the school curriculum and schedules of subject areas with teaching topics, activities, and textbooks. It would describe how curriculum and instruction evaluation will be carried out. It also needs to include the language arts of Mandarin, English, and other languages, and at least one course of a local language needs to be offered.

Participants told me they do have more autonomy to choose textbooks from the various publishers, and the content is more visual, with pictures and activities. But as a result of publishers' vicious competition, the content is not uniform: some is too easy for students, and some is harder. Sometimes students must spend more money on reference books or rely on *buxibans* to coordinate different contents from different schools. According to participants, Taiwan's educational system remains test based; educators hope to have a uniform textbook and add extra reference books if needed. That way, the gap between students' test scores in their English class could be narrowed. However, Qiu (2007) argues that it is not wise to revert to the uniform curriculum. In the past, only one English curriculum existed that was approved by the Taiwanese government, but educators believe that it would be better for students to have more options and therefore the ability to choose curriculum from different publishers. In my opinion, Taiwanese schools should not focus only on test scores and ignore the mainstream ideology hidden in the English curriculum.

According to Myles and Simpson (2001), the values of the dominant group are hidden not only in the curricula but also in pedagogies, class structures, and reward systems. Huang and Lu (2006) argue that the content of textbooks is not objective and instead focuses too heavily on mainstream culture to deliver and legitimize the social orders. Huang and Lu share an example in an English textbook: a lesson about occupations, which often ranks doctors at the highest level of socioeconomic status, but that lesson also calls attention to the prejudice of job classification. In an English class, students not only will learn the language but will become aware of social hierarchy and the relationship between the dominant group and those being dominated. Huang and Lu's statement echoes Bernstein's (2000) statement about how schools distribute dominant ideology through curriculum and how the schools reinforce class divisions. My suggestion in reference to the curricula is that we not only must introduce content about Taiwanese culture, in addition to American culture, but we also must adjust topics that focus on higher social status to avoid stereotypes about class and jobs. I understand that it is difficult to create a neutral English textbook, but English educators must critically evaluate the content and the choices in the English curricula--instead of almost blindly accepting everything from the textbooks that now are used.

I also believe the MOE should develop an assessment of ELE for elementary students. Currently, elementary schools offer only written tests for students, but listening and speaking skills should be included. Currently, the MOE plays a role in supervising the local governments after the educational system reformed in 2001, but the gap between rural and urban areas has grown. If the MOE centralizes its executive power, that problem could be solved. Another reason to suggest the MOE centralize its power is to help fill the gap between rural and urban areas regarding English learning. Due to the shortage of English

teachers in rural areas, the government implemented the *Elementary English Language Education Improvement Plan* in 2009. This plan is intended to encourage certified English teachers to stay longer in rural elementary schools. However, one of the participants, Wang, told me that certified English teachers are not willing to stay in rural schools for a long time because of inconvenient traffic and a shortage of educational resources. Wang was once in charge of English teacher training and applied for funding for a student to go abroad for further studying in ELE. That student promised Wang to return to serve in the rural school where Wang was teaching, but the student did not fulfill the responsibility. Another frequent issue in rural schools, Wang said, is high teacher turnover.

English teachers like to teach city students more than rural students because those children learned more English and are easier to teach, Wang added. Furthermore, teachers in cities have better access to technology, which helps students learn English. The findings show that socially advantageous groups benefit more from cultural capital in school than do less socially advantageous groups. The local governments in rural areas like that of my research field often are short of money to hire more English teachers, so students at two or three schools must share an English teacher, or these governments have enough funding to hire only substitute English teachers. Since 2006, MOE has had a distribution fund of billions of dollars to support selected universities. The project is called “the Aim for the Top Universities.” The purpose of this project is to promote universities internationally to attract foreign professors and students to Taiwan. I suggest the government set aside funds to support rural elementary schools, to solve the shortage of English teachers and to resolve the gap between rural and urban areas regarding ELE.

However, my suggestion is too idealistic to come true at this point. I do not deny the importance of the efforts that the MOE and ELE teachers make to support students to learn English, but they ignore the hierarchy of an educational system perpetuated and reproduced by the dominant group. And, in ignoring this, they work to reproduce it. Otherwise, the issue of the gap between rural and urban areas regarding ELE and educational resources will be solved during the process of transforming the educational system. According to Lawton (1992), education is inevitably political and the aim of educational reforms is always linked to ideological differences of the political parties. Weng (2007) argues that decision makers' and politicians' ideology often influences the establishment and implementation of education policies in Taiwan. Education often becomes a prey of political conflicts between two parties. Politicians usually use the reform of the educational system as propaganda for their election. Weng says the Taiwanese government focuses on higher education under the guise of globalization because our government believes that universities are the places to "create" elites, and these elites are the key to being able to compete with citizens of other nations. Therefore, elementary school principals face obstacles to secure funding for ELE. Participants shared with me their frustration with the hierarchical school system. Yet, it seems to me that these participants do not know how to use their power to challenge the system. Or, perhaps, they are unwilling to do so, even if they know how, in order to preserve their social standing.

Weng (2007) criticizes the fact that school teachers play a role in helping the Taiwanese government to convey the idea of the dominant ideology and to reproduce social class. In MOE's annual overview of policy and plan, the visions always focus on cultivating excellent and creative students as well as on improving Taiwanese students' international

competitiveness (MOE, 2013). Therefore, education in Taiwan should foster children's knowledge and creativity, and teachers should encourage students to think critically and to search for reality. Instead, Weng says that students listen passively and try to memorize teachers' words and lessons. Students are disciplined and stuffed with content knowledge to attain national goals. Weng's critiques fit into Paulo Freire's ideas of critical pedagogy. Freire (1996) criticizes the typical classroom experience as one where the teacher delivers a lesson to the students but does not give the students an opportunity to discuss and convey their own thoughts. In the ideology of oppression, teachers are the oppressor and students are oppressed; the role of the teacher is to dominate students' opinions. Freire's concept of education should involve cooperation between teachers and students, that is, teaching is not a monologue play but that teachers and students can learn from each other because students should be seen as people who have knowledge and opinions that might even influence the teacher. By endorsing students' ability of critical thinking about the educational system, students will be able to recognize the connection between their own experiences in the society in which they live, and they will know how to take action and resist oppression.

This study suggests that it is necessary for ELE teachers to obtain critical consciousness toward language policy and to build political subjectivities. Participants explained they focused mainly on English teaching methods in English instruction programs, so I am hopeful that the English instruction programs will implement social reproduction theory and critical pedagogy so that ELE teachers will politicize and empower ELE teachers to challenge the educational system and to help students. In other words, teachers and students alike must engage the reality that ELE is currently used more as tool for social

control and reproduction than it is for social mobility. This is an unavoidable reality that must be studied critically and thoughtfully.

Future Study

This dissertation will be the foundation of my future research. There are components I would like to add for the next step. The first step is to add a quantitative research study because integrating qualitative and quantitative data can complement each method's strengths and weaknesses. The strength of qualitative methods reveals the richness of information with transcripts of interviews, field notes, and observation. Quantitative methods can generalize data from a large sampling to find more appropriate data (Henning, 1986). Qualitative and quantitative methods are not always contradictory. Survey questions are not limited to "yes" or "no," and they can be framed in an open-ended form or as multiple choices or scales related to cultural, economic, and social capital lines of inquiry about ELE. By doing this, I think quantitative research can generalize the data began in this study for more rural areas.

The second step is to add working-class parents for their viewpoints of ELE. Participants say that parents in Taiwan usually make decisions about their children's education, and English is the subject that parents cannot follow up on their own. So they count on English language buxibans to relieve their anxiety about inconsistent language policy. Now, with ELE beginning in the first grade, I would like to interview parents to learn their views about ELE in Taiwan because their voices are usually omitted. Therefore, I think working-class parents' concerns need to be heard.

This study shows that English language is cultural capital that reinforces social inequality. Although ELE plays only a part in the reform of Taiwan's educational system,

English is still the most influential language worldwide in technology and business, especially for those Taiwanese people who need it as a communication tool.

Through using a social reproduction framework, I am able to capture multiple factors that illustrate participants' ideological viewpoints of English language as a mark of social distinction. Although social inequality has existed for years, ELE creates a barrier to working-class. After all, it creates mobility for those who already are of a higher class and for only some who occupy a lower status, but not for others. In fact, the "failure" of many rural, working-class people to not learn English is used as a rationalization for their ongoing class predicament. And teachers reflect on the issue of ELE. They say they treat the English language as a subject at school, not as a tool used in daily life. English is learned merely to pass quizzes or exams instead of being put to better social use. Therefore, whoever has the money to pay for admission to an English language buxiban gets the higher score, and other students may be destined to stay at the bottom.

This study warrants a further investigation that MOE policymakers should stop revising the language policy and instead should inspect issues related to ELE in rural areas. There is a question about whether the revision of language policy is possible to make new changes to help working-class students learn English. Chang (2011) criticizes the fact that decision makers have a false belief that they believe English will become the official language in Taiwan. Chang continues to say that the former president advocated in 2002 that English should become the second official language, behind Mandarin. Also, in 2003, the former president of Executive Department declared that within 8-10 years English would be the official language in Taiwan. In fact, that is too idealistic to ever happen because Taiwanese people had not been colonized by English-speaking countries, which means

children do not learn English as a first language. Chang (2011) reflects on the problems that learning English has brought to the forefront, such as increasing the popularity of the English buxiban culture, the expanding gap between urban and rural areas regarding ELE resources, and the lack of certified English teachers in rural schools. Chang explains that middle-school students' English grades have shown bimodal distribution, which means students either get the highest scores or the lowest. All participants told me that elementary students are currently going through the same thing and that it was easy to discern who already had learned English in buxibans and who had not. Li (2004) points out that the methods and curricula for teaching English that the MOE established are not designed for children from disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, Li says that the MOE has not yet come up an effective way to solve ELE issues in rural schools. Educators have raised similar issues and tried to appeal to the Taiwanese government to more seriously consider taking actions related to ELE (Li, 2004; Chang, 2011; Wang, 2014).

As students, parents, and teachers in Taiwan, we have not been taught to obtain critical thoughts toward the English language, but we are taught how to pass the exams and believe in achievement ideology. Although I criticized participants using ELE as a mark of social distinction, participants showed care for students in many ways by applying for subsidies for students, by trying to persuade school principals to purchase hardware for English class, and by searching for appropriate textbooks for students possessing different levels of English skills. However, in addition to their investment in their social status and dominant ideologies, these ELE teachers have limitations due to a shortage of funding and school resources in rural schools. As I suggested in the previous session, social reproduction theory should be implemented not only in English instruction programs at universities but

also in ELE workshops for current ELE teachers. Further research into higher education of English instruction programs and understanding the perspective of ELE teachers' learning experiences also are necessary.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol 1

Participants' Family/Social/School Backgrounds

1. Tell me about where you grew up?
2. What do your parents do for a living? Was your family richer or poorer than most families?
3. What was your experience like in school?
4. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
5. How did your family background influence your educational and economic opportunities?
6. Is there any incident where you felt left out, put down, or discriminated against because of your class at school? How did you and your friends treat kids from other social classes?
7. How do you think that people get to be in a certain class? For example, how do poor people become poor, middle class people become middle class, rich people become rich?
8. Do you think people can move between social classes [i.e. poor to middle class], how?

Participants' Experience of English Language Education

9. Tell me about how you learned English?
10. Why did you want to learn English?
11. Did you face any difficulties learning English or was it easy for you? Why do you think that this was so?
12. What do you think about students/people who do not speak English? What about those who are learning English but struggle?
13. What role does the English language play in Taiwan

Appendix B: Interview Protocol 2

English Language Teaching Background/Social Consequences

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. What made you want to become an English teacher?
3. How did you become an English teacher?
4. What grade/level are you teaching?
5. How would you rate your English skills?
 - Probe: How do you go about evaluating your English skills?
 - Probe: Are your English skills ever a source of feelings for you—positive or negative?
6. What does it take to acquire native-like English fluency?
 - Probe: What are some of the things you have done to improve your American accent?
 - Probe: Do you encourage native-like fluency with your students?
7. What do you think is the benefit of having English skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening)?
 - Probe: Should people who don't speak English still get good jobs? Why or why not?
 - Probe: Are students who don't learn English well still good students? Why or why not?
8. What does it mean to you to be an English teacher?
 - Probe: Do you feel that being an ELE teacher gives you a high standing with other educators? How about society as a whole?
 - Probe: Do you have enough autonomy? Ever thought about quitting it? Why?
9. Describe the school where you teach? Is this your ideal school? Why or why not?
 - Probe: What is your school's social status? (Middle-class or working-class)
 - Probe: What issue does the class background of your students create for learning English?
 - Probe: Do you think things would be better if you were teaching different kids (i.e. from a different social class)?
 - Probe: Why did you decide to teach at this type of school (i.e., this social class of school)?
10. What do you think about private institutions that teach English language?
11. Have your personal/social experiences with English language education impacted your teaching beliefs?
12. What positive role do the parents of your students play in their learning English? What negative role?
13. Do you have any difficulty in terms of communicating with students and parents? What kind? Why do you think it happens?
 - Probe: Do all of the parents support ELE? How do you know?
 - Probe: How would you assess your interactions with parents?
 - Is there anything else about ELE you would like to share with me?

Appendix C: Participants' Backgrounds and Occupation Locations

(Summer & Fall, 2011)

Name	Age	How they became ELL teachers	Teaching grade level	School locations	Language spoken
Tao	32	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Capital City (Orca school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Zhang	40	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Capital City (Whale Shark school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Li	47	University TESOL program	3-6	Township A (Milkfish school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Wang	38	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Milkfish school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Xu	36	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Blowfish school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Zhou	33	University TESOL program	3-6	Township A (Blowfish school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Ma	55	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Grouper school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Hong	58	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Grouper school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Ke	53	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Grouper school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Yu	50	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Grouper school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Lin	37	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township A (Grouper school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Chen	36	University TESOL program	3-6	Township B (Fighting Fish school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Huang	39	ELE teacher preparation program sponsored by the MOE in 1999	3-6	Township B (Fighting Fish school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English

Name	Age	How they became ELL teachers	Teaching grade level	School locations	Language spoken
Xie	35	University TESOL program	3-6	Township B (Mola school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English
Gao	30	University TESOL program	3-6	Township C (Trout school)	Mandarin, Taiwanese, English