

The Taiwan Cram School Dilemma

The dilemma of spoken English in Taiwan is complicated. Exploring my vendetta towards cram schools has opened a Pandora's box pointing to parenting, the government (Ministry of Education), and simply the Taiwan operating system. They are virtually equal transgressors in this disgusting industry of education and it's certainly the children who suffer. It's a gamification plan that will turn your children into nothing more than useful malleable idiots. It doesn't exercise articulation of an argument in any way, and that's the only way you're truly going to learn a language.

It seems a big problem with our operating system in learning is the asinine obsession with books. Spoken English oftentimes plateaus and sometimes even regresses after kindergarten. This is usually when the learning stops and the studying begins. To learn a language you must think in that language. Most people are not thinking in English, and you hear it ALL THE TIME! The following are just wrong: "my home have a dog", "I don't have say", "yesterday I go to play with my friends" and so on. These should be: "I have a dog", "I didn't say that", "I hung out with some friends yesterday" and so on. If your mind is now reeling, hoping to find a book with more examples like these, this IS the operating system problem. We don't need any more books. Maybe if we spent more on teachers and less on books we would be getting somewhere. We should be learning opposed to studying. This depraved lack of speaking makes writing practice a nightmare to say the least. It is typical that I meet people who have been 'studying' English for YEARS who do not know how to swiftly tell me how old they are, or their name, not to mention the non-existence of simple past tense verbs. It's a sad indictment on the system and English teachers. Shame on everybody. I mustn't fail to mention another telling scenario found with very young learners and spelling. The poor child for example can spell 'cat', 'fat', 'rat', is stumped at 'bat' and has no problem with 'library'. If you can't comfortably say and repeat a word, you shouldn't be spelling it! It's frustrating that I should even have to explain to anyone that it's stupid to study how to spell words that you cannot say. It is evident that in this operating system a word can only be spelled correctly, and points for actually using your ear is a foreign idea.

The asinine government tests and testing questions are a notable reason for the frustrations mentioned. Cram schools give results and show noticeable improvement on these tests. They are also a serious source of revenue for our beloved government, because it is no secret the expensive cram school licenses they bestow are a safeguard that our children are in an environment that meets their divine standards. Any thought of them possibly being in cahoots with a book publishing company/cram school is just crazy conspiracy talk that ought to be stifled.

Now let's talk about parenting. Many people have children and obviously don't want them. You don't want children if you can only see them on the weekends and it's just as simple as that. A good upbringing is one where the families eat dinner with no cellphones, play board games, and count their blessings together. It is evident they largely don't. It's so sad to know that children can pass childhood and not sit at the dinner table together with family and talk about their day. If only evidence of the most basic parenting were seen with your child; the child should know the basics, like speak when you are spoken to. Try teaching a class anything if none of them speak when spoken to. When no response or a grunt at best is the norm, it's obvious to me parents are not interested in parenting. Many cram schools are arrested-development centers with pupils 13+ years old who do not respond in any way when spoken to. There is no excuse for this idiotic scenario foreign window-dressers often find themselves in at cram schools. These poor 'teachers' are in a system that virtually renders them as a necessary evil. It is especially frustrating if the Chinese teacher makes excuses for this ignorance. I don't see it as more than a Chinese teacher trying to build the case for mass graves, and that is not Chinese culture, it is control that inhibits freedom mind-controlled-style culture! Taiwan is a bastion of freedom in Southeast Asia AND Chinese culture, so let's not forget it!

There is actually a very happy ending to this sad story. This foolishness can all be over like a bad dream as soon as we stop looking to the culprits as our orators of salvation. There are many great changes we can make here that don't have a big price tag, which are merely evidence of the the industry preying on the lazy. In fact, if we look to the budget of the Philippines we should be elated to see this will save us money! We must resist the laziness of depending on government to fix this and can surely contemplate something less extreme than shipping our children abroad as the only solution! Think - it's not illegal yet!!!

By Ross Cline

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臺灣補習班的窘境

在臺灣，英文口語教育陷入的困境是個複雜的議題。我在探究自己對補習班的宿怨時，發現了問題癥結——教養子女的方式、政府（教育部），還有就是臺灣的作業系統。它們在這可憎的教育產業犯下的罪行幾乎是同等重大的，而受苦的當然是孩子。這是個遊戲化的方案，會將你的孩子變成好利用、順從的白痴。它不會讓你以任何方式練習表達論點；而只有練習表達看法，你才能真的學習語言。

我們作業系統很大的一個問題是對於書本的頑固執著。英文口語學習經常在幼稚園後就停滯不前，有時甚至開倒車。這通常是在停止學習、開始讀書的時候發生。要學習一種語言，你一定要用那個語言思考。大部分的人不用英文思考，你一天到晚都會聽到台式英文！以下真是大錯特錯："my home have a dog"、"I don't have say"、"yesterday I go to play with my friends" 等等。這些應該是："I have a dog"（我有一隻狗）、"I didn't say that"（我沒有說）、"I hung out with some friends yesterday"（昨天我跟朋友出去玩）等等。現在，如果你在動腦筋，想找本有更多這種例子的書，那就是作業系統的問題。我們不需要更多的書。如果我們不花那麼多的經費在書本上，而是花比較多在老師身上的話，語言能力可能就會進步。我們應該學習，而不是死讀書。對話的嚴重缺乏，導致寫作練習成了惡夢，這麼說實在不為過。我常常碰到「唸」英文很多年的人沒辦法馬上告訴我他們幾歲、或者他們的名字，要他們使用簡單過去式動詞就更甬提了。這是對體系和英文老師的悲情控訴。每個人都要感到羞愧。我還得提出另一個明顯的例子，出現在年幼學童的拼字能力上。可憐的孩子能夠拼出例如 cat、fat、rat，可是要他拼 bat 就被難倒了，但竟然還能夠拼出 library。你如果沒辦法自在地說出和重複說一個字，就不應該拼那個字！還有人甚至需要我解釋，學拼你說不出來的字是很蠢的事，這實在令人氣餒。很顯然，在這個作業系統裡，字只能被正確拼出來，而真的用你的耳朵去聽字學習，是個陌生的概念。

愚蠢的政府考試和測驗試題是我之所以氣餒的一大原因。補習班提供成效，學生在這些考試中的成績明顯進步。它們也是我們敬愛的政府一大收入來源，因為眾所皆知，他們授予補習班的昂貴證照會保障我們的孩子在符合他們神聖標準的環境中上課。任何懷疑他們跟出版公司/補習班有所勾結的想法純屬陰謀論的胡說八道，應加以遏止。

現在，我們來談談為人父母。很多人有小孩，而顯然他們都不想要有孩子。如果你只能在週末看孩子，那代表你不想有小孩，就是這麼簡單。全家共進晚餐時不看手機、一起玩桌上遊戲，還有一起知足常樂，才是好的教養方式。很明顯大多數人不這麼做。孩子的童年中可能從不跟家人共進晚餐、談談他們的一天，實在悲哀。要是你的小孩能表現出最基本的教養，該有多好；孩子該懂基本禮數，例如有人跟你講話的時候，就要答話。如果你對一班學生講話而沒人回應的時候，看你能教他們什麼。當沒有反應、或頂多哼一聲是常態的時候，對我而言很顯然家長是無心養育子女的。很多補習班是「發展停頓中心」，13歲以上的學生在有人跟他們講話的時候都毫無反應。粉飾補習班門面的外師經常遇到這種智障情景，沒有推卸的藉口。這些可憐的「老師」所屬的體制簡直把他們變成一種必要之惡。台籍助教為這種無知找理由的時候更是令人感到無力。我覺得那並不是台籍助教試圖支持人性的泯滅，而且那不是中華文化：那是妨礙自由的思想控制文化！臺灣是東南亞和中華文化的自由堡壘，我們千萬別忘了！

這則悲傷的故事其實有個皆大歡喜的結局。只要我們不再將造成問題的元兇視為救星，這種荒誕的現象就可以如一場惡夢般告終。我們毋須花大錢，就能做出諸多重大改變，那些教育天價不過證明了業界在剝削懶得教養小孩的家長。事實上，如果我們看看菲律賓教育改革的預算，就應該會很樂見這能為我們省錢！我們必須抗拒老是倚賴政府幫我們解決問題的懶散習性，而與其把送孩子出國視為唯一的解決方案，我們絕對可以找到沒那麼極端的方式來改善孩子接受的教育品質！思考—這目前還沒被列入違法行為！！！！

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