

英文密集補救課程之成效探討： 以北台灣私立科大為例

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摘要

隨著科技的進步英文成為網路溝通最主要的語言，提升學生英文能力也成為台灣各校園之培育主流。可惜並非所有學生之英文能力皆能達到校訂之標準，英文加強補救課程隨之接踵而起以協助學生通過門檻為目標。究竟英文密集補救課程之成效為何，本研究針對北部一所科大的 57 位學生進行研究，並於為期五週的課程中作前、後測，結果顯示學生確實於課後不但成績表現進步，同時也增進了他們的英文學習動機。

關鍵字：補救教學，英語學習



The Effectiveness of English Remedial Intensive Course: A Case Study in a Northern Private University

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Abstract

Since technology development shortens the country distance, English has become the major language to communicate on the Internet. Therefore, a rapid growth of English demand arises in Taiwan. English related courses are designed to elevate students' proficiency to meet the global trend. However, not all students can have well proficiency. For reinforcing students' English learning, remedial intensive courses are usually provided to elevate students' English ability. In order to investigate the effectiveness of remedial program, this study aimed at discovering students' academic performance through a remedial course in a university of science and technology in northern Taiwan. In this study a sample of 57 freshmen signed up to participate in a 5-week intensive English program. Data were collected through pretest and posttests and a survey conducted in this study. The results show students' performance in the post test was improved and their perception of learning motivation was also enhanced through the remedial instruction.

Keywords: Remedial program, English learning



1. Introduction

After the development of technology, the distance between countries has been rapidly shortened through Internet. People can retrieve data or information through Internet easily. Therefore, a rapid growth of English demand in Taiwan has been arisen for two main reasons. First, it is for personal purpose. Many people deem English as a power to search information or communicate with people in the distance through the Internet. Second, in workplace companies prefer to employ those who with language skills and computer literacy to prepare their future overseas expansion or to do international business. Therefore, coping with the trend of globalization, both government and schools work hand in hand to elevate students' English proficiency.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan accordingly inspires its citizens' English proficiency by officially implementing English language education to third grade students in 1998. In 2002 it was more expanded to first graders. It is believed that to receive education in a foreign language earlier will stimulate students' learning outputs better (McLaughlin, 1984). Beside primary school, MOE (2013) also puts a lot of efforts on promoting international education for secondary school. Moreover, although the issue of imbalance between quantity and quality of universities in Taiwan is still evident as MOE noticed (2013), English related courses are offered to meet the needs of the degree of globalization in higher education.

However, MOE's efforts on English education do not assure all students with equal English proficiency level. Because of the openness of increasing colleges, more students with lower academic achievements are able to receive admissions to enter colleges (Chen, 2004; Yang 2010). In reality, in this low birth rate era many schools offer admissions to students for their own survival in the concept of teaching without leaving anyone behind. Students, therefore, usually lack of English proficiency which results in their failure to achieve the basic skills necessary for



successful English learning in this highly demanding society. As a result, cram schools are boomed and more and more remedial programs are offered at schools. But, can these remedial programs work well to serve the purpose of elevating students' learning outcome or raising their learning motivation?

Tsai et al. (2011) conducted a research of 172 freshmen in a remedial English program in Taiwan and concluded the program did promote English ability among lower English achievers in a technical college. By offering students a chance to study English from scratch, students' learning pressure was reduced and their learning interest and self-efficacy were enhanced.

For assessing whether a 2-month strategy training course could improve students' effectiveness of strategy use and to examine the implementation of strategy training in the remedial English program, Kao (2007) conducted a treatment to vocational school students in a group of 80. Results showed the effectiveness of students' strategy usage in grammar. However, the researcher commented that what students could really learn from the program was limited.

Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2006) conducted an educational longitudinal study in the United States and indicated that "remedial education acts as a gatekeeper and a quality control in higher education" (p.916). However, the controversy over remediation is still ceaselessly.

For getting more evidence in viewing the effectiveness of remedial language course, this study aimed at discovering students' academic performance through a remedial course in a university of science and technology in northern Taiwan. Based on the research purpose, two research questions were addressed in this study:

- (1) What is students' progress after receiving remedial instruction?
- (2) What are students' perceptions toward the remedial program?



2. Method

2.1. Participants

Table 1 Demographics in the intensive program.

Departments	Number	Percentage
Department of Industrial Management	5	9%
Department of Business Administration	4	7%
Department of Finance	7	12%
Department of International Business	5	9%
Department of Information Management	7	12%
Department of Computer Information & Network Engineering	4	7%
Department of Electronic Engineering	7	12%
Department of Electrical Engineering	6	11%
Department of Mechanical Engineering	5	9%
Department of Chemical and Material Engineering	4	7%
Department of Multimedia & Game Science	3	5%
TOTAL	57	100%

A sample of 72 college students signed up to participate in a 5-week intensive English program in the second semester of year 2012. However, only 57 data results of them were gathered due to the incompleteness of posttest. These 57 freshmen are from various departments (Table 1) beside the applied foreign language departments. They have to meet the college requirement of passing a standardized test, the College Student English Proficiency Test (CSEPT). They do not have any experiences in taking this test before entering this intensive program. These students were selected from the test results administered by the Language Center when they took general English course. They were determined as a group of high risk of passing graduation threshold.

2.2. Pretest and posttest



Mock CESPT was given in the first and the last class sessions. The CSEPT was originally developed to meet the needs of some colleges or universities to evaluate the effects of English teaching and to assess the progress the students were making in English. It has two levels. Level 1 is intended for students with elementary to intermediate levels of English proficiency. Level 2 is intended for students with intermediate to advanced levels of English proficiency. In this study the mock CSEPT adopted the level 1 version. Responses are machine-scored. The score range for each subtest is 0 to 120 ; hence, the total score for the mock CSEPT is 240.

The test includes two sections: listening subtest and usage and reading subtest. For listening section, test tasks contain two parts: conversations and short passages which will take about 20 minutes to complete. This section mainly focuses on testing students' ability to comprehend the main ideas, contextual features and supporting details of English conversations and discourse as well as their ability to make inferences or interpretations based on the information.

Test tasks for usage and reading section contain three parts: sentence completion, cloze, and reading comprehension. Students will have 55 minutes to complete this subtest. The construct for this part is to know students' knowledge of syntax, vocabulary and cohesion. Besides, it is also intended to know their ability to understand the main ideas, contextual features, as well as supporting details of English graphs/tables, advertisements, public notices and essays. Moreover, their ability to make inferences or interpretations from the information provided is also tested.

2.3. Procedure of data collection and analysis

In this study, the tests and questionnaires in our study were administered in students' classroom at school. The remedial instruction lasted for 5 weeks. The class met every Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 4:40pm to 6:20pm for preparing CSEPT. Before processing the remedial instruction, the pretest data was



gathered in the first meet. The posttest was administered along with questionnaires in the last class. The purpose of pretest and posttest was aimed at identifying students' English proficiency level and to see students' progress after having remedial instruction. The survey with 6-liker scale questionnaires was conducted to examine students' perceptions toward their motivation of learning English. Data in terms of the pretest and posttest, and the questionnaires conducted in this study were analyzed.

3. Result

The results of this study are shown in two ways: students' test results and their perceptions toward the program in a self-develop survey.

3.1 Students' test results

Table 2 Average scores in pretest and posttest among various department students.

Department	n	Pre-test			Post-test		
		L.	R.	Total	L.	R.	Total
Industrial M.	5	73.8	69.4	143.2	77.8	81.4	159.2
Business A.	4	59.5	69.5	129.0	62.5	73.5	136.0
Finance	7	71.4	73.3	144.7	57.0	75.7	132.7
International B.	5	57.6	71.4	129.0	74.6	80.6	155.2
Information M.	7	59.0	59.0	118.0	67.1	69.9	137.0
Computer I.	4	64.8	73.0	137.8	65.8	81.5	147.3
Electronic E.	7	69.1	79.9	149.0	66.6	86.4	153.0
Electrical E.	6	62.5	78.0	140.5	72.7	88.7	161.3
Mechanical E.	5	71.2	81.8	153.0	84.4	90.6	175.0
Chemical E.	4	61.5	84.0	145.5	78.0	93.0	171.0
Multimedia & G.	3	81.7	63.7	145.3	73.3	83.0	156.3
TOTAL	57						
AVERAGE		66.6	73.0	139.5	70.9	82.2	153.1



Students' test results in both of pretest and posttests among different departments were shown in Table 2. The average score of posttest (153.1) was improved 9.75% compared to the pretest (139.5). Students' progress was found in their posttest (Table 3). Students from the department of Finance show negative improvement rate among all departments.

Among 11 groups of students, students from the department of international business have greatest improvement rate in total score (20.3%) followed by the group from chemical and material department (17.5%), information management (16.1%), electrical engineering (14.8%), mechanical and material engineering (14.4%), industrial management (11.2%), while students from the finance department has the least one (-8.3%). To view more specifically in listening and reading skills respectively, students from the department of international business have greatest improvement in listening (29.5%), followed by students from chemical and material engineering (26.8%), mechanical engineering (18.5%), electrical engineering (16.3%), information management (13.7%). For reading skill, students from multimedia and game science department have the greatest improvement (30.3%), followed by information management (18.5%), industrial management (17.3%), electrical engineering (13.7%), international business (12.9%), computer information (11.6%), mechanical engineering (10.8%), and chemical and material engineering (10.7%).

Table 3 Progress rate (%) among departments.

Department	n	Listening	Reading	Total score
Industrial Management	5	5.4	17.3	11.2
Business Administration	4	5.0	5.8	5.4
Finance	7	-20.2	3.3	-8.3
International Business	5	29.5	12.9	20.3
Information Management	7	13.7	18.5	16.1
Computer Info & Network Engineering	4	1.5	11.6	6.9



Electronic Engineering	7	-3.6	8.1	2.7
Electrical Engineering	6	16.3	13.7	14.8
Mechanical Engineering	5	18.5	10.8	14.4
Chemical and Material Engineering	4	26.8	10.7	17.5
Multimedia & Game Science	3	-10.3	30.3	7.6
Total	57	6.5	12.6	9.7

3.2 Students' perceptions toward the program

Table 4 Students' perception toward remedial intensive course.

	S. Agree	Agree	P. Agree	P. Dis-	Dis-	S. Dis-
It enhances your English learning motivation.	2%	14%	41%	25%	18%	0%
It improves your English overall proficiency.	2%	7%	50%	27%	9%	5%
5-weeks program is too intensive.	25%	27%	36%	5%	7%	0%
Willing to attend similar program.	5%	18%	41%	16%	11%	9%
It enhances your self-confidence to real CSEPT.	2%	7%	57%	20%	11%	2%

Table 4 shows students' perceptions toward the remedial intensive English course. Among all participants, 57% students indicated that the remedial program positively enhances their English learning motivation and 59% of them agree their overall English proficiency was improved. Although these numbers indicates the effectiveness of students' short-term English learning results, 88% students think the program is too intensive and only 64% students report the willingness of attend



similar intensive remedial program in the future. Even though the study of whether remedial intensive language course has relationship with students' long-term language proficiency is not covered in this study, 66% students agree the program can enhance their self-confidence to take the real CSEPT.

4. Discussion

From the results of this study, some findings are explored. Our results consistently showed that students exposed for 5-week intensive instruction could gain great achievement in CSEPT mock exam. Nearly all the students attend willingly for passing the graduation threshold. Their attendance rate is more than 80%. The students who have high attendance gain more improvement than those who don't. In general, it would appear that the attendance rate relates to students' improvement in this intensive remedial program. The results show that there were gains in students' performance in the post-test. The finding suggests that the students have developed a better preparation of taking real CSEPT in this study.

When the performance of individual departments is taken into consideration, it was found that the performance of students in the Department of Finance is less satisfactory than other groups in the study. If looking closely on the results of students from that department (Table 5), we can find students' test results in reading are slightly better than listening. This may result in the instruction was given in a regular classroom instead of lab. Students may encounter difficulty because of lacking ability in listening and other environmental factors such as noise. However, this issue is not the purpose of this study. For future implication it is suggested to consider classroom setting factor in similar remedial studies.

In table 5 it is worthy noted that student E performs less satisfactory among 6 students. It is because the student was late for the post-test which may result in her



rush of answering questions. To see all mock exam result in a whole picture with various situations, student E's test result was not excluded from the research.

Table 5 Test results of students from the Department of Finance.

Student	Listening			Reading		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement Rate	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement Rate
A	91	62	-32%	93	95	2%
B	77	43	-44%	79	75	-5%
C	77	58	-25%	87	95	9%
D	67	77	15%	65	87	34%
*E	58	34	-41%	49	41	-16%
F	58	77	33%	71	75	6%

*Lateness on test day.

Overall, the findings indicate that the intensive remedial course is effective in improving the foreign language skills in reading and listening. Despite the relatively short course of only five weeks, students who received the instruction obtained higher scores in the posttest. In addition to measures of language skill improvement, students' perceptions toward foreign language learning were also found. More than fifty percent students show their positive attitude toward further foreign language learning. Moreover, their self-confidence in taking real CSEPT was elevated. It is worthy to note that despite the effectiveness of such intensive remedial course, students show unwillingness to take similar course because of the high intensity and pressure the course brought.

Due to its small sample sizes, the present study could not fully explore the possibility of enhancing students' language learning skills in either speaking or writing. Another limitation of the study is that the intensive remedial course was delivered after regular school hours. Although it seems rather unlikely to affect the test results, it certainly can not be precluded that students may have low energy which would directly or indirectly affect their learning. Further research should also



include a more systematic evaluation to view the improvement among all departments in more detail and qualitative data on students' perception toward long hour learning in a day are needed to be gathered for analyzing its effect on intensive remedial course.

5. Conclusion

With the rapid demand of English, countries like Taiwan devoting on English education may consider the effectiveness of remedial language programs. To gain an English certificate seems to become a must for finding a so call good job. Therefore, being in the front line of education, we all know the importance of assisting students to earn one certificate and we all get insights that education can shape our future. How we don't notice is that we sometimes have adverse order to let tests lead our education. Under much pressure, schools offer many remedial courses to offer an opportunity for those who are high risk of lacking certain ability. Although this study shows that the remedial program has great potential for helping students prepare a standardized test in an intensive form of instruction, there is clearly room for improvement in their long-term English proficiency. How to make students' short-term memory turn into long-term one will be much more serious issue for educators.

In this certificate-must era, no one can refuse schools' offer of remedial course. After all, the original aim of establishing such program is good. Nevertheless, it is worthy to know such kind of remedial program can never take place of regular teaching and learning. More attentions need to be paid when incorporating remedial programs into learning.



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