

Negotiating Voice and Authority in Co-Teaching: Foreign English Teachers' Lived Experiences and Classroom Discourse Practices in Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological–descriptive qualitative study examined the lived experiences and classroom discourse practices of Filipino Foreign English Teachers (FETs) engaged in co-teaching arrangements under Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy. Grounded in Positioning Theory, Teacher Agency Theory, and Classroom Discourse Theory, the study explored how Filipino FETs negotiate professional voice, instructional authority, teacher agency, and discourse participation within bilingual co-teaching classrooms.

Findings revealed that Filipino FETs continuously negotiated professional identity, instructional authority, and classroom participation within institutionally structured and culturally mediated co-teaching environments. Participants frequently experienced asymmetrical instructional roles, with local teachers maintaining greater control over classroom management and curricular decisions while foreign teachers were often positioned as communicative facilitators. Classroom discourse practices such as turn-taking, questioning, feedback delivery, and instructional control reflected broader power dynamics and institutional expectations. The study further identified challenges related to role ambiguity, discourse inequity, and institutional constraints affecting teacher agency and collaboration.

In conclusion, the lived experiences of Foreign English Teachers in Taiwan's co-teaching classrooms are shaped by the continuous negotiation of instructional authority, professional identity, and discourse participation within institutionally structured environments. Classroom discourse practices such as turn-taking, questioning, feedback, and instructional control serve as important sites where authority and professional voice are enacted, negotiated, and at times constrained. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that effective co-teaching depends not only on pedagogical coordination but also on equitable professional recognition, collaborative structures, and institutional support systems that enable both teachers to participate meaningfully in bilingual instructional contexts.

Keywords: Bilingual 2030 Policy, co-teaching, classroom discourse, Foreign English Teachers, teacher agency, positioning theory, professional identity, phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Taiwan's bilingual education reform under the Executive Yuan Bilingual 2030 Policy positions bilingualism as a national strategy for strengthening global competitiveness and improving English proficiency through the implementation of co-teaching arrangements between local Taiwanese teachers and Foreign English Teachers (FETs) in public schools. Specifically, the study investigates how FETs experience discursive positioning, teacher agency, and instructional control while working alongside Taiwanese co-teachers in public elementary and junior high schools. Through a phenomenological lens, the study explores how classroom interaction patterns such as turn-taking, questioning, feedback, and pedagogical decision-making shape the lived experiences and professional identities of Filipino FETs in bilingual education settings.

Recent scholarship indicates that bilingual education reforms frequently generate tensions in teacher identity, pedagogical control, and professional collaboration. Studies in Taiwan suggest that co-teaching partnerships are mediated by institutional norms, cultural expectations, and established classroom hierarchies (Nix, 2021; Hsieh & Teo, 2021). Additionally, research on foreign English teachers highlights challenges such as role ambiguity, limited decision-making power, and experiences of marginalization within local school contexts (Yeh, 2023; Lao & Espiritu, 2025). These findings underscore that policy intentions do not always translate seamlessly into classroom realities.

Previous empirical studies in Taiwan have primarily examined bilingual policy implementation (Hsueh, 2025), co-teaching collaboration (Hsieh & Teo, 2021; Chou, 2021), and student learning outcomes in bilingual classrooms (Rao et al., 2021). Other investigations focused on foreign teacher identity and adaptation (Yeh, 2024; Padgett, 2025). However, these studies largely relied on policy analysis, interviews on adjustment experiences, or general co-teaching evaluations, with limited discourse-oriented examination of how foreign teachers negotiate instructional authority, participation rights, and professional voice during actual classroom interaction. Furthermore, empirical studies specifically centering Filipino Foreign English Teachers as discourse participants in Taiwan's co-teaching classrooms remain scarce.

In response to this gap, the present study examines the lived experiences and classroom discourse practices of Filipino foreign English teachers engaged in co-teaching settings under Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy. The findings of this study are intended to inform the development of a policy brief and pedagogical recommendations, particularly those that may contribute to clearer role articulation, equitable discourse participation, strengthened teacher collaboration, and improved co-teaching effectiveness. Moreover, the results may serve as an empirical basis for refining institutional guidelines, including potential enhancements to the contractual provisions governing foreign English teachers, ensuring that expectations regarding instructional roles, authority, and classroom participation are more explicitly defined and aligned with classroom realities.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological–descriptive qualitative design to explore the lived experiences and classroom discourse practices of Filipino Foreign English Teachers (FETs) engaged in co-teaching under Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy. Phenomenology was selected because the study sought to understand how participants experienced and interpreted professional voice, instructional authority, teacher agency, and classroom participation within naturally occurring co-teaching environments.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved Filipino Foreign English Teachers employed in Taiwanese public elementary and junior high schools implementing the Bilingual 2030 Policy across Taipei City, New Taipei City, Hsinchu City, Taichung City, and Kaohsiung City. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) Filipino nationality, (2) current employment as an FET in a public school, and (3) direct experience in co-teaching arrangements with Taiwanese teachers. Participant recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved, wherein no substantially new themes emerged from subsequent interviews.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews designed to elicit participants' experiences of instructional participation, professional identity, authority negotiation, and classroom discourse practices. Interview questions focused on co-teaching experiences, classroom interaction patterns, questioning strategies, feedback practices, instructional control, and professional relationships with local co-teachers.

Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed member checking, iterative coding procedures, and peer debriefing during theme development. Credibility was enhanced through repeated engagement with the data and

verification of interpretations with selected participants. The researcher also engaged in reflexive bracketing to minimize personal assumptions and maintain sensitivity to participants' perspectives throughout data collection and analysis.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initial codes were generated inductively from participant narratives and subsequently organized into broader categories and themes. Data analysis proceeded iteratively, allowing continuous refinement of thematic interpretations. Findings were interpreted through the lenses of Positioning Theory, Teacher Agency Theory, and Classroom Discourse Theory to examine how authority, identity, and participation were negotiated within co-teaching contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that co-teaching under Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy is best understood as a negotiated rather than fully integrated instructional arrangement. Across the eight emergent themes, participants described co-teaching as a collaborative structure shaped by institutional expectations, discourse practices, pedagogical demands, and cultural norms. Although policy discourse promotes partnership between Foreign English Teachers (FETs) and Local English Teachers (LETs), participants frequently experienced collaboration through differentiated and sometimes unequal instructional roles.

Co-Teaching Roles and Power Dynamics

Participants consistently described co-teaching as collaborative in principle but uneven in practice. Anj explained, "My role is mainly to create activities that will help the students practice speaking and listening, while my co-teacher manages the class and handles discipline." Jaydee similarly stated, "I conduct the lesson, but the local teacher helps translate and manage the class when students don't understand." Mae further noted that "Sometimes I only teach part of the class, especially the activity or game part, and the main teacher handles the rest." These accounts suggest that instructional responsibilities are frequently divided according to communicative and managerial functions, positioning FETs as language facilitators while LETs retain greater control over classroom management and curricular implementation. Such findings support Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 2007), which argues that authority emerges through interactional practices rather than formal role descriptions. Consistent with Hsieh and Teo (2021), the findings indicate that co-teaching partnerships often operate through differentiated rather than fully shared instructional authority.

Classroom Interaction and Discourse Patterns

The findings further revealed that classroom interaction was coordinated but segmented. Participants described lead-support structures in which teachers entered and exited interaction strategically according to their assigned roles. Translation frequently served as a mediating mechanism that enabled comprehension while simultaneously reinforcing role distinctions between FETs and LETs. These interactional patterns suggest that classroom discourse functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a site where authority and participation are negotiated. This finding aligns with Walsh's (2006) Classroom Discourse Theory, which emphasizes that turn-taking structures and interactional control reflect broader distributions of power within educational settings.

Instructional Practices and Pedagogical Tensions

Participants frequently described tensions between communicative language teaching objectives and curriculum-driven expectations. Sam observed that "There's always pressure to finish the lesson and follow the textbook, so sometimes communication is limited." Similarly, participants reported adapting communicative activities to meet examination requirements, curriculum pacing, and school expectations. These findings demonstrate that instructional decision-making is shaped by competing pedagogical priorities. While the Bilingual 2030 Policy promotes communicative competence, participants' experiences suggest that examination-oriented practices continue to exert significant influence over classroom instruction. This finding echoes previous research highlighting the challenges of implementing communicative approaches within assessment-driven educational systems.

Student Participation and Language Mediation

Student participation emerged as both a goal and a challenge. Participants described how students frequently relied on local teachers for clarification and language mediation. Kenneth noted that lower-proficiency learners often require additional support, while Pea explained that translation frequently becomes necessary to sustain classroom participation. These findings suggest that language mediation serves as a bridge between policy aspirations for English-medium interaction and students' actual linguistic readiness. Rather than functioning merely as a support mechanism, mediation became an integral component of classroom participation and instructional delivery.

Feedback Practices and Learning Climate

Participants emphasized the importance of feedback in sustaining student engagement and building learner confidence. Both affective and corrective feedback were commonly employed to support language development and encourage participation. However, participants also reported instances where overlapping feedback practices created inconsistencies in instructional messaging. These findings suggest that effective co-teaching requires not only shared pedagogical goals but also coordinated approaches to feedback delivery. Consistent communication between co-teachers appears essential for maintaining a supportive and coherent learning environment.

Professional Identity and Teacher Development

The findings reveal that professional identity is fluid and continuously negotiated within co-teaching contexts. Nica reflected that "At first, it wasn't very clear, so we had to figure it out as we went along," highlighting the uncertainty associated with role construction. In contrast, Drey explained, "We had meetings before, so the roles were clearer, and we knew what each of us would do." These contrasting experiences demonstrate how institutional support and collaborative planning influence professional identity formation. Participants frequently described balancing multiple identities as language instructors, collaborators, cultural mediators, and support figures. Consistent with Yeh (2024) and Padgett (2025), the findings suggest that foreign teachers' identities are shaped through ongoing negotiation between institutional expectations and classroom realities.

Contextual Constraints and Enabling Factors

Participants consistently emphasized that co-teaching experiences are shaped by broader institutional and sociocultural conditions. Anj noted that "Planning time and communication with my co-teacher really affect how the lesson goes," while Nica described situations where teachers had to "figure things out during the lesson" because prior coordination was limited. Participants also identified curriculum requirements, student proficiency levels, and cultural expectations as important influences on instructional decision-making. Teachers' ability to exercise professional judgment was strongly influenced by organizational support, collaborative relationships, and available planning structures.

POLICY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Participants consistently identified a gap between policy intentions and classroom realities. While the Bilingual 2030 Policy promotes collaborative bilingual instruction, participants reported inconsistencies in role expectations, planning opportunities, and institutional support. The findings suggest that co-teaching effectiveness depends not only on teacher competence but also on organizational conditions that support equitable participation. Participants emphasized the need for clearer role articulation, structured co-planning opportunities, co-teaching training, and stronger institutional support systems. These recommendations indicate that current co-teaching arrangements often rely on individual adaptation rather than systematic support. Strengthening collaborative frameworks, clarifying instructional responsibilities, and providing sustained professional development may help promote discourse equity and improve the long-term effectiveness of bilingual education reform.

Taken together, the findings suggest that co-teaching under Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy operates as a negotiated system characterized by complementary but uneven roles, coordinated but segmented interaction, and

adaptive but constrained pedagogy. Co-teaching in this context is not merely an instructional strategy but a complex social practice shaped by the interplay of policy, discourse, identity, and institutional structures.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the lived experiences and classroom discourse practices of Filipino Foreign English Teachers (FETs) engaged in co-teaching under Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy. Findings revealed that co-teaching functions as a negotiated instructional process in which professional voice, instructional authority, and participation are continuously shaped through institutional expectations and classroom interaction.

Although co-teaching was intended to promote collaborative bilingual instruction, participants frequently experienced unequal distributions of instructional roles and authority. Classroom discourse practices—including turn-taking, questioning, feedback, and instructional control—emerged as key interactional spaces where agency and professional identity were enacted and negotiated. These experiences demonstrated that participation in co-teaching extends beyond task sharing and involves ongoing negotiation of legitimacy, pedagogical influence, and professional recognition.

The study concludes that strengthening co-teaching effectiveness requires more than policy implementation alone. Greater discourse equity, clearer role articulation, institutional support, and opportunities for shared pedagogical decision-making are necessary to foster meaningful collaboration between local and foreign teachers. By foregrounding the voices of Filipino FETs, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how bilingual education policies are experienced in practice and offers insights for improving collaborative teaching in multilingual educational contexts.

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