

Academic Cultures in Distance between Penn State Taiwanese Graduate Students and American Teachers: A Case Study

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Abstract

Academic cultures in distance between ESL/EFL students and native English-speaking teachers have been one of the research focuses in the TESL field for the past decade. Many researchers argued for the need of exploring the mismatching beliefs/expectations about learning and teaching between ESL/EFL students and their native English-speaking teachers. This study aimed to investigate the differences between EFL Taiwanese students and their American teachers concerning their beliefs/expectations toward what constitutes a good teaching and learning. It further explored how those differences might cause EFL Taiwanese students' cross-cultural adjustment problems, and push both students and teachers to modify their learning or teaching styles/strategies. Eight Taiwanese graduate students with different majors at Penn State University in the U.S. were the participants, interviewed concerning their perspectives about different cultures of learning between Taiwanese and American teachers/students in an academic setting. The results of this research yielded positive evidence that academic cultures in distance between Taiwanese students and their American teachers might exist in the classroom at Penn State University. In addition, five issues related to cultures were identified as the main factors that caused the different expectations/beliefs about learning and teaching between Taiwanese students and their American teachers: authority in power, learner autonomy, the power issue, the face issue, and group harmony.

Based on the findings, this research provided not only a framework for understanding Taiwanese students' culture of learning, but also useful suggestions for education in the field of TESL as well as in cross-cultural studies. It could be innovative with respect to language pedagogy and language learning in the U.S. as well as in Taiwan.

Key words: academic cultures, culture of learning, ESL, EFL, TESL

賓州州大臺灣籍研究生與美國老師之間學術文化差距的個案研究

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摘要

存在於英文為外語的學生與英語為母語的老師之間學術文化上的差距一直是過去十年來英語教學領域的研究重點之一。許多研究學者強調探討兩者之間針對教與學不同的信念與期望的研究需要。本研究目的除了探討臺灣籍學生與美國籍老師之間針對教與學的信念與期望的差距之外，更進一步研究這些差距如何造成臺灣籍學生跨文化的適應問題，與如何促使雙方修正他們的學習或教書的風格與策略。八位就讀於美國賓州州大的臺灣籍研究生分別接受專訪，發表他們個人針對在學術環境中臺灣籍與美國籍的學生老師之間的學習文化的觀點。本研究結果顯示的確有學術文化上的差距存在於臺灣籍學生與美國籍老師之間。造成這些差距最主要是跟文化有關的五個因素：權威性問題、學習者自主性問題、權力問題、面子問題、團體和諧性問題。

本研究有助於了解臺灣學生的學習文化特質，因此提供了實用的參考價值與建議給英語教學與跨文化研究領域的老師與學者們。

關鍵字：學術文化、學習的文化、英語為外語、英語教學