

ALL LECTURES IN ENGLISH AT THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEPARTMENT: TOUGH BUT WORTH IT

One may feel a brief moment of disbelief when walking into the classes of freshman Class C of the International Trade Department. Chinese is hardly heard nor uttered. You've heard it right--all lectures, name-calls, Q's and A's are in English. All students sit there in class with their pocket translators, remaining silent, concentrating on their teacher's lecture for fear of missing any explanations given in English.

It is the first year this Department has decided to have all classes for freshman Class C in English in their first and second years. Students in Class C were mainly recruited to TKU through application. This decision is to prepare them for participating in the Junior Abroad Programs in their third year. Professional courses such as Economics, Accounting, Marketing and five other optional core courses are all conducted in English. Other courses before taking the core courses such as History, Literature and Arts, Military Training and Physical Education remain to be conducted in Chinese.

It had been originally planned to recruit 60 students; yet 41 enrolled after a presentation of the idea of classes in English. Most of them wish to study abroad. Some of them find it hard to adjust to such a total-immersion English program, but some have already noticed the progress in their English ability.

One of the students, Chen Lian-yu expresses his positive impression as he can see the care and effort that the Chair and other staff of the Department are putting in so as to ensure the success of this trial

program, which is the first of its kind on campus. Lee Ya-chen, another student, believes her English has benefited already from this English-only program. It is tough but her hard work will pay off eventually.

Some of the students felt “shocked and embarrassed” initially when they were unable to understand a word in the lectures. Furthermore, it takes time to adjust to the fact that class preparation is more time-consuming compared to students in other departments since all the textbooks and lectures are in English. One of them jokes that the only time Chinese is heard is when the students cannot understand teachers’ questions, as most teachers switch to Chinese to express their disappointment at such an occasion.

The Chair of the Department, Lin Jyh-horng reckons that it is expected and understandable for students in freshman Class C to find the first two weeks difficult, even though the average standard of their English proficiency is commendable. He believes that it is still too early to judge the success or failure of this program; the result can only be evaluated at the end of this semester. In the long run, what he wishes to achieve through this ground-breaking project is to ensure these students to be able to go abroad to study in their junior year, and once they complete their undergraduate credits, they can take some of the graduate courses related at TKU in their senior year. Then, with their solid foundation in English, Chairman Lin is confident that they will be able to continue and complete their graduate studies in one year at our sister universities.

2010/09/27