Cultural diversity in the classroom: Shortcomings and successes of English co-teaching programs in East Asia

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Abstract. English co-teaching programs between native speakers and local teachers have been established in schools in a number of countries in East Asia with the aim of improving standards of teaching and students' English proficiency. Despite the large investment of resources, there is little clear evidence in the literature that the objectives have been achieved, and research has identified a number of challenges such programs face in an East Asian context.

This study first examines different co-teaching programs in East Asia where it finds cultural friction, role confusion, differing concepts of professionalism and unrealistic goals are the main factors undermining the effectiveness of such programs. It then looks at the Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching Program which seems to have been able to overcome many of these obstacles.

Keywords: TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), co-teaching, native vs. non-native English teachers, Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching Program**.**

1. Introduction

The economic development of East Asian societies over the past thirty years has coincided with the expansion of English language learning into school classrooms worldwide. Countries and regions such as Japan, Korea and Hong Kong have set up programs inviting thousands of native speaker teachers of English, both certified and uncertified, to come and work in their public school systems. The program in Hong Kong is known as NET, the Native English Teacher scheme; in Korea, as EPIK, English Program in Korea; and in Japan, JET, the Japan Exchange and Teaching program. This represents a huge investment of social resources by governments in these countries, yet there is often surprisingly little rationale behind the decision to import native speakers. In the case of the Hong Kong scheme, one of the evaluators of the scheme commented: "In my experience, theoretical underpinnings are noticeably lacking in justifications for NET schemes, at least as proposed by governments" (Storey, personal communication, 08/12/2008).

East Asian governments are not alone in lacking a solid evidence-based rationale for their language education policies, as the senior British Council official quoted in Phillipson's study of the politics of English language education pointed out, "I don't know a single country in the world which bases its English teaching on research, it's all a matter of administrative and political convenience" (Phillipson 1992: 238).

Importing native English speakers, often uncertified and inexperienced, on a large scale to work alongside non-native local teachers implies that something is lacking in the local teacher. What can native teachers bring to the classroom that local teachers cannot offer? Unfortunately this question often degenerates into a sterile debate about who is the better teacher of English, the native speaker or the local teacher? For some, such as Randolph Quirk, there is no doubt that it is the native speaker (Quirk 1990) and pedagogical developments of the last thirty years, notably the widespread use of the communicative approach, have certainly conspired to make it look so. Chomskyan linguistics defines the native speaker as normative, the ideal informant, the arbiter of grammar, the model for grammar – indeed a grammar is only descriptively adequate when it describes the intrinsic competence of the native speaker (Davies 2003). Thus, the native speaker, as characterized by Llurda (2005) is the ultimate criterion in all matters linguistic, whose verdict settles all disputes; like the kings of old, the native speaker can do no wrong. The Anglo-American English speaking countries thus form a core (Kachru 1986), also known by the acronym, BANA (Britain, North America, Australia), which claims ownership of English (Canagarajah 1999).

2. Native and non-native speakers as English teachers

One of the first researchers examining the distinctive value of non-native English teachers was Medgyes (1992, 1994) who made a radical distinction, arguing that it is impossible for a non-native speaker to achieve native speaker competence no matter how motivated, educated or experienced he or she may be. According to Medgyes, the native English speaker has superior linguistic competence and offers a perfect language model. When teaching, the native speaker creates an environment in which it is natural for students to address the teacher in English. Also, the native speaker symbolizes the culture of English-speaking countries. However, all is not lost, the non-native speaker's supposed disadvantages are precisely the strengths which give them advantages over native speaker teachers, namely: they are successful role models of language learning; their teaching is based on their experience of learning English as a second language; with their knowledge of both English and the students' mother tongue, they can better anticipate students' learning difficulties; they are more empathetic and can better understand the needs of students; when necessary they can use the mother tongue to clarify and elaborate.

Cook (1999) disputes the idea that native speaker teachers' language is superior. He believes the distinctive achievements of proficient non-native English teachers are overshadowed by native speaker domination of research, methodologies and textbooks. Cook maintains that we cannot continue to define non-native speakers as failed native speakers. Being a native speaker is an accident of birth, becoming one is a biological impossibility, therefore the native speaker is an unachievable and unnecessary ideal. Proficient non-native speakers of English are multi-competent, fluent in more than one language, something native speaker teachers are not, for the most part. Rampton (1990) therefore suggests we abandon the concept of "native-ness", an ethnically charged term, and categorize speakers in terms of their expertise.

Being an effective teacher does not depend on being a native speaker of English; both native and non-natives can be good teachers, but in different ways. Given their complementary strengths, they have the potential to meld a co-teaching partnership that is educationally and culturally beneficial for students and teachers.

However, the claim of native speaker superiority in language and pedagogy lies like a geological fault-line undermining East Asian co-teaching schemes. Current emphasis on the communicative language approach continues to exalt the native speaker as the model of good English language and pedagogy. Native speakers have long assumed they have a patent not only on proper English, but also on the ways of teaching it (Widdowson 1994). The criterion for effective English instruction becomes the teacher's oral proficiency. In East Asian contexts this can lead to the devaluation of the non-native teachers. Shin (2007) comments that Korean parents believe that only the native speakers can give their children access to authentic English language and culture – authentic English here meaning oral English. Tanaka (2000) finds that while native speakers teachers are a valuable boon to English language learners in Japan, their presence overshadows the job performance of experienced local teachers of English who have a solid foundation in second language acquisition theory, state of the art teaching methods and willingness to help students. But because current pedagogical trends in Japan stress speaking and listening, Japanese teachers' self-image tends to get degraded and students' scepticism about their ability is reinforced, whereas, in fact, as proficient users of English, local teachers represent a much more realistic model for Japanese students.

Overemphasis on authentic language, oral fluency and communicative methodologies at the expense of literacy and engagement with texts leads to what Holliday (2005) calls "MacCommunication", and he notes that Asian learners often find English classes taught by expatriate teachers with western methodologies lightweight.

3. Review of current programs

Let us turn for a moment to examine how the East Asian native English teacher programs actually work in practice. Considering the large amounts of money spent on them, there are surprisingly few studies of learning outcomes, motivation or teacher development, apart from the detailed University of Melbourne reports commissioned by the Hong Kong government into the NET scheme (Griffin 2004, 2005, 2006; Storey 1998, 2001). There is, however, abundant literature documenting the difficulties which arise when natives and non-natives attempt to work together in the classroom (Boyle 1997; Carless 2006; Lai 1999; Lung 1999; Storey 2001).

3.1 The Hong Kong NET scheme

In the case of Hong Kong, the stated goals of the NET scheme were to deal with the perceived low standard of English among local Hong Kong teachers, raise the quality of English teaching in schools and improve students' English proficiency. The unstated goal was to change the socio-linguistic climate of the work place from monolingual Cantonese speaking to one that was bilingual and bicultural in keeping with the Hong Kong government and business community's vision of Hong Kong as an international financial centre and entrepot (Lai 1999).

Research shows that some of the goals of the program were met, such as that of creating an environment in which students felt freer to speak English (Storey 1998, 2001). Other goals, for example, that native speakers with their proficiency and pedagogical knowledge would upgrade the skills of local teachers, were not (Carless 2006). Native speakers tended to find themselves isolated within the schools, unable to socialize or take part in meetings due to their inability to speak the local language. Communication difficulties were compounded by the fact that schools wanted to give as many students as possible access to the native speaker, albeit for one hour per week, but this made it hard for the native speakers to get to know any of the students, they felt that they were sometimes merely "human tape recorders or babysitters with entertaining games" (Egginton 1997: 315).

There were discrepancies between foreign and local teachers' views on syllabus and methodology. Native speakers found it difficult to accept Asian educational culture, with its emphasis on the text book, memorization and examinations. Local teachers resented the idea that native speakers with qualifications no better than their own were coming into their schools with higher salaries in order to teach them how to do their job when, due to their inability to speak Chinese, they were often unable to manage the class properly and needed support from the local teacher (Boyle 1997).

The goals of the Hong Kong scheme may have been unclear, leading native speakers to believe that they were going in to improve and reform teaching, but as one school administrator explained in Griffin's study:

> Of course the native speaker can bring some new ideas to us. We can collaborate and learn from each other, but it can't be the case that the native speaker comes and becomes the leader. It is impossible. After all, our (local) teachers know what our curriculum is. They also know what the students have to learn in different learning stages. They know it better (Griffin 2006: 19).

In terms of learning outcomes there appear to have been gains, though patchy, in English proficiency as a direct result of the scheme (Griffin 2004, 2005, 2006; Storey 2001), although as Griffin comments, "whether this was a sufficient return on the considerable investment is not known. More than 600 million dollars is a vast sum to invest in language development" (Griffin 2006: 197).

3.2 The EPIK program in Korea

EPIK started in 1995; by 1997 there were 856 EPIK teachers in schools. Like NET, this program was also intended to improve students' oral English and local teaching methods (Kwon 2000). Research evaluations of the program found clear instances of cultural misunderstandings which undermined its effectiveness. After surveying

forty schools in Pusan and Kyongsangnamdo, Ahn, Park and Ono (1998) pinpointed some of the challenges. Local school administrators ranked cultural conflict as the greatest difficulty – apparently a recurring phenomenon in the scheme (Choi 2001), followed by native speaker teachers' frequent absences and early departures from school, lack of communication and general "lack of professionalism". The Korean English teachers in the study said difficulties arose because the native speakers could not control the students, did not know how to adapt their teaching to the students' level, failed to prepare thoroughly for class, relying more on instinct and intuition, and were always dependent on the local teacher to understand students. The native speakers complained that there was a general lack of effective communication and that the students were difficult to control. They also thought that local teachers spoke too much Korean in class. These problems have in fact led to many native speakers being withdrawn from schools (Carless & Walker 2006).

Kwon and Kellogg (2005) discovered important differences when the same teacher in a Korean school taught the same English lesson to her home room class as one of a number of general subjects and when she taught it to other classes whom she only saw for English, her specialist subject. Her deeper knowledge of her home room students streamlined her teaching and made it more effective than when she taught several different classes with whom she was much less familiar. Kwon and Kellogg question how EPIK participants can teach students whose names they cannot even pronounce. In another study, Shin and Kellogg (2007) observed that local teachers tended to make linguistic gaffes while the expatriate teachers made cultural gaffes. They also found that local teachers were much better able to scaffold students' knowledge and to lead them up to the topic. In one class they investigated during their longitudinal study, the local teacher used seventy-three turns of English dialogue to prepare students for the main topic, whereas the expatriate teacher introduced it after only nine turns. As Junki, a local teacher in a study conducted by Shin (2007) explained, "I know the Korean educational system and how to make things meaningful for the students" (Shin 2007: 81).

Shin and Kellogg (2007) conclude that language is not like water brought by the native speaker into which students are to be immersed; it is part of the bumpy terrain of the classroom to be navigated. Only the teacher who is able to arrange the social environment can skilfully manipulate the language. It seems that in the Korean classroom that person is most likely the local teacher.

3.3 Japan Exchange and Teaching program

The JET scheme started in 1977 and by 2001 over 70,000 native speakers had passed though the scheme (Carless 2006). The program's linguistic goals are fourfold: to enrich English teaching in Japan by team-teaching with Japanese teachers; to help prepare teaching materials; to provide on-the-job training of teachers; and to take the lead in English extracurricular activities (Crooks 2001).

JET is administered by three government ministries: Education, Foreign Affairs and Home affairs. The Foreign Ministry selects and interviews the teachers, and the Ministry of Home Affairs finances the scheme. The native speakers are given an orientation on arrival in Japan, and there is a mid-year training seminar for both native and non-native teachers. The methodology to be used is team-teaching, though the role of the native speaker is intended to be subordinated to the local Japanese teacher of English. As the involvement of several government ministries suggests, the goals of the program are not only linguistic; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hires young westerners exclusively. They are not allowed to stay in Japan for more than three years. The government's goal is both linguistic and diplomatic: to give a favourable impression of Japan to young westerners and to give young Japanese exposure to western culture while at the same time reaffirming their Japanese identity (Lai 1999).

There are few studies of the JET scheme's effectiveness in terms of learning outcomes or gains in motivation. The program has faced difficulties arising from lack of communication, training and clarity about roles (Carless & Walker 2006; Tajino & Tajino 2000). The expatriate presence in the classroom has caused many Japanese teachers to be concerned about their role and competence as teachers, and has produced tensions and pressures between the two groups (Crooks 2001). Surveys reveal that most local teachers expect the expatriate to model western culture whereas the native speakers see their main role as offering English conversation (Mahoney 2004).

An example of the cultural misunderstandings that complicate native speaker teacher programs in Asia can be seen in Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) study of English teaching in mainland China. Their investigation revealed that mainland Chinese students thought western teachers less knowledgeable or helpful than local teachers. Students like to have western teachers as they are good role models for pronunciation and sources of cultural knowledge; however, because they emphasize communication rather than linguistic knowledge, students think they are poor at teaching, especially when they use western methodologies (Anderson 1993). Liu and Zhang (2007) found that Chinese students believe they learn more from courses taught by Chinese teachers. Western teachers find Chinese students friendly and hardworking, but complain that they are passive, unwilling to ask questions and reluctant to discuss ideas (Cortazzi & Jin 1999). However, this is because Chinese teachers anticipate learner questions in their explanations; asking questions risks wasting the time of classmates and losing face. It is also bad form for a student to show off knowledge in class which inhibits answering. Chinese students expect their teachers to be role models since it is precisely through education that the learner is led to the Confucian ideal of the *jun-zi*, the person of virtue (Reagan 2000). Western teachers should be aware that Chinese students learn the English language and the culture associated with it, through the medium of Chinese educational culture. Therefore it is not enough to use western cultural materials and methods in class – attention has to be paid to the culture of learning whence derive the concepts of what constitutes good teaching and learning.

4. A successful program in Taiwan

One scheme that seems to have been able to avoid or overcome issues of native speaker isolation, devaluation of non-native teachers, lack of professionalism and cultural friction is the Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching Program, a joint venture between the U.S. Fulbright Foundation and Yilan County Bureau of Education (Erlewine 2008). Like China, Taiwan has no national scheme to recruit expatriate teachers. However, a few pioneering localities such as Yi-lan County have sought overseas partners to help set up their own programs. The Fulbright Taiwan program has been running since 2001 and has brought more than one hundred native speaker teachers to Yilan. We decided to look more in depth at the scheme to try to discover some of the factors behind its success.

4.1 The Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching Program

Yilan County occupies a large plain in north-eastern Taiwan surrounded on the west by high mountains. The capital, Yilan City, is a town of 94,000 people. The program is administered by the Yilan County Elementary English Advisory Panel, consisting of the academic advisor, normally a Fulbright scholar from the U.S. specializing in TESOL, plus local education administrators who have English teaching experience. There is a competitive selection procedure to choose American college graduates, who may or may not be certified teachers, with an interest in Taiwanese culture and teaching English as a foreign language. On arrival in Yilan in July each year, they are joined by local English teachers for a one-month orientation. In 2008, 24 schools took part in the scheme and sent teachers to join the orientation (Fulbright - Yilan Project Orientation Handbook 2008).

The first week is devoted to getting acquainted with Taiwanese culture, followed by three weeks learning about the local education system, visiting schools and modeling co-teaching. Training continues throughout the year in the form of fortnightly seminars which enhance lesson planning and teacher cooperation. Thus, ongoing professional development and support are key aspects of this program, which Crooks (2001) finds lacking in the JET scheme, because Monbusho, the Japanese Ministry of Education, is reluctant to offer more training due to the large number of teachers involved. Yilan's smaller scale and limited geographical location make this possible.

The native speakers also begin their Chinese language studies during the orientation and these continue, two hours per week, throughout the year. This facilitates communication with local people; westerners speaking even a smattering of Chinese are well regarded by locals who appreciate the effort they have to make. In his study of good teaching practices in Japan, Carless attributes the success of expatriate teacher Josh, to his proficiency in Japanese (Carless 2004). Sharing the same mother tongue and culture, Japanese teachers tend to identify with their students rather than with their co-teachers, according to Carless, but Josh's acculturation enabled him to gain the esteem and cooperation of his local partners.

By training local and foreign teachers together, Fulbright attempts to create a collaborative environment and establish personal relationships that will facilitate co-teaching. In terms of roles, the native speakers are told that the local teacher is the pedagogical expert, knows the students, the local language, the culture of learning and the society. The native speaker brings along an English-speaking environment, oral proficiency, knowledge of the target culture plus youth and enthusiasm.

Fulbright and its local partner believe that co-teaching is the best instruction delivery method to balance the strengths and weaknesses of local and foreign teachers. In co-teaching, two teachers cooperatively plan, instruct and evaluate a class in order to take advantage of the special competencies of each teacher (Buckley 2000). The pedagogical expertise of the local teacher is combined with the linguistic and cultural expertise of the native speaker. This program exemplifies Widdowson's (1994) observation that the context of authentic language use gives some privileges to the native speaker, but the context of learning, informed by the values and beliefs of the students' cultural world, gives the decisive advantage to the local teacher.

The new teachers are seeded in local public schools as teaching assistants where they teach some 8,000 students in both rural and urban schools. Unlike the other schemes we have reviewed, the allocation to schools is partly by choice, though the advisory panel makes the final decision. This is done at the end of the orientation when there is "speed-dating workshop", after which the new teachers and the schools are able to express their preferences. The number of schools interested in having a native speaker exceeds the number of teaching assistants available. Regular attendance at the orientation increases a school's chances of getting one.

Restricting the program to just one county makes the logistics of attending seminars, traveling to schools, observing classes and meeting teachers easier. The smaller scale of the program enables the project administrators to create a support network for the newly arrived teachers, who are bonded together into what the panel calls a cohort (Erlewine 2008). Fulbright's local partners organize accommodation that places the native speaker teachers in each town in adjoining apartments. Solidarity between teachers and regular feedback sessions help avoid the sense of isolation felt by native speaker teachers in other programs. Participants record their experiences in a databank for the benefit of incoming teachers. In addition, each new teacher is assigned a local host family who help them settle in, cope with initial procedures and invite them to celebrate holidays or visit local sites of interest.

4.2 Reactions of program participants

As part of our investigation, we attended the one-month orientation and fortnightly seminars, not only to understand the workings of the program at first hand, but also as a way of establishing relations with participants and gaining their trust prior before interviewing them. We interviewed twelve native speakers and several local teachers as well as the academic advisor and other panel members. All agreed that the month of orientation was an important factor in the success of the program. The native speakers said that they got a lot of their teaching ideas from there. Local teachers told us that the program, especially the orientation and seminars, was very demanding for them because of the travelling required. Also, they have to spend time taking care of the expatriate teachers. However, they are very supportive: "It is worthwhile for the sake of our students," one teacher told us.

The native speakers also face a demanding experience: admission to the Fulbright program is not easy; "getting accepted was as hard as doing a whole credit course with weekly meetings with the dean responsible, good GPA, essays and proof of commitment to the program," we were told by one new teacher. Commitment to the program goals is one of the characteristics we noted in both the local and foreign teachers, which seem to enable them to overcome some of the inevitable difficulties which this and other East Asian joint teaching schemes run into.

The native speakers stressed the challenge of working in a Taiwanese classroom. Many reported feeling inadequate because of their elementary Mandarin Chinese, one said, "Without Chinese it cannot work". Apart from this, they found it difficult to get to know the students, "they all look the same" and it was hard to gauge student abilities or push them. Many felt their lack of experience compared with the expertise of their local co-teacher.

The local teachers were positive about the program. They see the native speaker teachers as an authentic language models, especially for pronunciation and a good source of vocabulary, idioms and cultural knowledge. Their own

English proficiency had improved from the contact with native speakers, and there were socio-linguistic benefits since several of them reported they had previously felt shy when talking to foreigners.

Local teachers appreciated the difficulties the young expatriates were facing and valued their idealism. They observed their culture shock coping with a new country and educational system. They sympathized with them trying to find their role in the classroom. They saw at first hand the difficulties which they had controlling the class and gauging the abilities of local students. However, this understanding did not blind them to the failings of the native speakers, and the interviews revealed a number of professional differences. One local teacher complained that "they care a lot about things that are not the main point", another that they are impractical, "they wait for over ten seconds for a student to answer a question, when there is not really enough classroom time for that".

The native speakers complained about local methodology and curriculum. They felt local teachers tended to stick too closely to the textbook and syllabus, even when the material was too easy. The teaching method involved a lot of recitation and repetition. Some found the classes too regimented, and local teachers seemed intolerant of on-task noise.

Class management issues are dealt with by the local teachers. While several of the native speakers commented positively on the kindness with which the local teachers deal with pupils in general, they found it hard to understand the local disciplinary system and felt some of the punishments were meaningless. However, they accepted that discipline was the responsibility of the local teachers, so this did not become an issue.

There were also different criteria on assessment, some of the trained native speakers teachers felt some of the tests constructed by local teachers lacked validity, and they would have preferred to use more portfolio and project work. Also the emphasis on getting the right answer was difficult to accept for teachers accustomed to a more constructivist approach to learning. Local teachers said that although in theory they subscribed to some of the pedagogies the native speakers were advocating, they were constrained by the syllabus and by forces which outsiders might not appreciate, such as the demands of the school principal and the expectations of parents.

Interviews also revealed failures to fully implement the co-teaching model. A common complaint among native speakers was that there was not enough time for their suggested activities and no real place for creative input. Or they felt they were not properly integrated into the class. One local teacher acknowledged how difficult she was to work with: "My lesson plan is mostly in my head, it's hard for me to share it". This indicates the need for better joint planning, which is a vital element in successful co-teaching (Villa, Thousand & Nevin 2008).

5. Factors leading to a successful program

Despite its best efforts, the Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching program clearly encounters the same problems that plague joint teaching schemes elsewhere; however, it seems to have the resources to deal with them and keep the program smoothly on track. Difficulties arise owing to lack of proficiency in the local language, wide disparity in educational culture, lack of time for communication and joint planning and, occasionally, personality clashes. However, the teaching teams are able to overcome these. As one young expatriate said, "I don't agree with my present co-teacher but we can still have a good relationship. We are united by our desire to help the kids succeed". Several interviewees compared it to a marriage; you have to work at it but when you do, things improve.

Having good administrative systems helps overcome these failings. The mixed panel of local and U.S. advisors supervising the running of the scheme can swiftly identify and defuse problems. Panel members visit schools, observe classes, and talk to teachers and school administrators. The fortnightly seminars organized by the advisory panel enhance cultural awareness, clarify teachers' roles and improve the co-teaching as the participants' expertise grows. Thus the expatriate teachers learn to work within what is in many ways a very traditional Chinese educational culture. If there are clashes, the panel can negotiate solutions. When a problem seems insoluble, a partnership is not working, or the school is not using the native speaker in the appropriate way, then the panel may even re-deploy the native speaker if necessary.

This program enjoys an unprecedented depth of community support, ranging from local political figures, since successful educational programs are popular with voters (Chen 2008), through officials at the county education

bureau and English teachers to ordinary families. School administrators show flexibility and support by allowing their English teachers leave to attend workshops. Thus the community, together with co-teaching and the cohort, are factors that help account for the program's success.

The core of the program is the teaching teams themselves, and there we found that mutual professional respect enabled the teachers to work together in spite of the wide disparities of culture and background. Our interviews showed that while local and foreign teachers were aware of each other's weaknesses, they had a high opinion of each other. The native speakers admired the professionalism of the local teachers, their willingness to host them and train together, their knowledge of students, of what students are comfortable with and what they are capable of, and their ability to communicate with the students. They appreciated the fact that local teachers were not possessive of their classes and shared their knowledge of the students. Understanding of students is recognized as a key quality of a good teacher (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1993; Carter et al. 1998; Tsui 2003), and both foreign and local teachers ranked it highly in interviews. The native speakers lack this knowledge and they are unlikely to acquire it given the language difficulties. In their turn, the local teachers appreciated the enthusiasm and dedication of the native speakers and their willingness to spend their free time giving remedial classes to those who needed extra help. They commented on how they showed sympathy for weaker learners that local teachers very often lack.

Lawton (1999) maintains that good will is not enough for co-teaching programs to work; effective collaboration requires more than just good intentions. Liu Jun, first non-native president of TESOL (2007-08), highlights professionalism as the most important of those requirements: "It does not matter whether the teacher is native or non-native speaker, as being either carries advantages and disadvantages, what matters is the teacher's professionalism" (Liu 1999: 101).

We hope that our observation of the Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching Program has helped identify and illustrate some of the requirements of cross-cultural co-teaching programs and how they can be met. We believe the solutions lie in a strong administrative system to follow up on the working of the scheme and troubleshoot where necessary; ongoing joint teacher development and feedback sessions; study of the local language and culture; a network to help the expatriate teachers, and support from the wider community. These characteristics facilitate co-teaching performance in the classroom where native and non-native teachers are able to witness each other's professional skills and commitment, which in turn facilitates cooperation and mutual respect.

The applicability of our findings may be limited by the fact that, although high-profile, the Fulbright Taiwan scheme has until recently been limited to one county only. The program's success has led Fulbright and the Kaohsiung Education Bureau to launch a similar venture in Taiwan's second largest city. As the Kaohsiung program only went into operation in August 2008, our findings are based entirely on data from Yilan. Nevertheless, we believe they are sufficient to show that the design, practice, logistics and supportive attitudes of the people involved all provide rich implications for large scale, national co-teaching programs in the East Asian region.

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