

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING FOR THE CHILDREN OF NEW IMMIGRANTS IN TAIWAN: PERSPECTIVES OF NEW IMMIGRANT PARENTS

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Abstract

International marriages have increased the population of new immigrants in Taiwan. Most Taiwanese educators are unaware of the expectations of the new immigrant parents. This ethnographic research explored whether Taiwanese primary school teachers implemented culturally responsive teaching to help the children of new immigrants become academically accomplished from the perspectives of the new immigrant parents. The findings indicated that most Taiwanese primary school teachers were aware of the challenges the children of new immigrants faced but culturally responsive teaching approaches were rarely implemented in any meaningful way, and that Taiwan still lacked effective communication styles, multicultural curriculum design and culturally congruent teaching. While most Taiwanese teachers recognized cultural differences, they failed to pursue measures to achieve educational equity. The new challenges and relevant issues are discussed.

Keywords: *culturally responsive teaching, ethnographic research, international marriages, primary school teachers*

Introduction

Taiwan is attracting an increasing number of new migrants, particularly women, from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Southeast Asian countries through cross-border marriages. These marriages are mostly driven by poor economic opportunities in the immigrants' home countries, Taiwan's continuing "Southbound Policy" to promote trade and economic relations with the nations of Southeast Asia and the need of unmarried Taiwanese men to have children to continue their family lineage (Chen, 2010; Shiu, 2003). In 2016, the Taiwan government's announced "New Southbound Policy" takes the people-oriented approach and aims to foster bilateral exchange and mutual resources sharing and focuses on talent cultivation, exchange, and communication (MOE, 2020a). As of 2020, 2.36% of Taiwan's population consisted of new immigrants, defined here as non-Taiwanese people migrating to Taiwan for marriage after 1987 (561,630) (Ministry of Interior, MOI, 2020) is more than the total of Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples (559,426). The children of these new immigrants are referred to as New Taiwanese Children (NTC) versus the Taiwanese Children (TC) whose both parents are original Taiwan citizens. NTC comprise 9.83 % of students in grades 1-6 (97,846, 8.36%) and G7-9 (68,955, 11.3%) (Ministry of Education, MOE, 2020b) posing new challenges to Taiwan's education

system. Educational success is dependent on active collaboration between teachers and parents, especially when one or both of the parents are new immigrants, and teachers must develop an understanding of how such parents perceive schooling (C. Banks, 2019; Hiatt-Michael, 2001). In order to resolve the problems, there are three stages of educational regulations on the NTC education. The first one is prior to 2013 Torch Project. At this stage, there were not specific strategies, and it usually focuses on the Chinese language learning and life adjustment of the new immigrants, and little attention is paid to the NTC bicultural and bilateral identity development (Chen, 2010). However, the New Taipei City held some multicultural activities such as Songkran (Waster-sprinkling) Festival in Thailand and Burma. The second stage is the nation-wide Torch Project (2013-15) collaborated by MOE and MOI focusing on the primary schools. The idea originated from the Torch Project in New Taipei City in 2007 to increase multicultural awareness in Taiwan society, and new immigrant languages in public schools (Li, 2009). Meanwhile, there have been multilingual and multicultural mass media, newspapers and programs sponsored by Taiwan government. For example, there have been (1) *Sifangbao*, a multilingual newspaper mainly in Southeast Asian languages and Mandarin Chinese, (2) the radio program, such as “Taiwan My Home”, (3) the television program (We Are Family), and (4) Television news in Southeast Asian languages on the Public Television Service Channel 13 (Huang, Ou, & Wu, 2015). In 2017, the Taipei City Government started to celebrate the Festival of Fast-breaking (Eid al-Fitr). At the third stage, the new immigrant languages are offered as one of the regular language curriculums in primary school beginning in 2019 *Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education*. Multicultural education also has become one of the significant issues that have to be integrated in the regular curriculum (MOE, 2020).

Nonetheless, the parents of NTC are usually reluctant to visit teachers or ask questions because of their relative lack of proficiency in Taiwanese or Mandarin Chinese or other cultural differences. In addition, many of these parents work long hours, making it difficult for them to actively participate in their children’s schooling. Such parents are still acutely concerned with their children’s education, but their inability to actively participate in the educational process might serve to exacerbate the cultural gap between home and school (Wu, 2011). Cultural differences might decrease NTC learning motivation, and low academic achievement could result in part from teachers being unaware of how to modify their teaching styles to accommodate the communication needs and learning styles of marginalized students. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the perceptions of the new immigrant parents toward their children’s schooling to establish cultural continuity between the students’ home and school. Culturally responsive teaching has been proposed as a useful approach to help disadvantaged students, and to develop a positive identity and fulfil their academic potential (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Liu & Lin, 2011).

The primary school level is regarded as the most important foundation for academic achievement in Taiwan, thus Taiwanese parents are more concerned about the academic achievement of their children from the primary school level comparing to the kindergarten level. Also, projects related to new immigrants such as 2007 (New Taipei City) and 2013-15 Torch Project (nation-wide) concentrated on the primary school because primary school students’ workload and pressure of entrance examinations are not as heavy as the junior or senior high school level. This study, therefore, explored the perceptions of new immigrants towards Taiwanese school teachers in primary school level and their perception of the effect of implementing culturally responsive teaching on their children to determine the proper role of culturally responsive teaching. The following research questions were raised:

1. What are the perceptions of the new immigrants on primary school teacher expectations for the NTC?
2. What communication style do Taiwanese primary school teachers use with the NTC?

3. What understanding do the new immigrants have regarding primary school curricula?
4. What is the new immigrants' perception of the implementation of culturally congruent teaching and learning by the primary school teachers?

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (also referred to as culturally relevant/compatible teaching) is an appropriate approach to help marginalized students, and is a concept used in the pursuit of social justice by means of creating cultural continuity between students' home and school environments. In this approach, educators raise their own self-awareness and integrate knowledge about cultural diversity into teaching action to help promote student achievement (Banks, 2019; Bennett, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowsky, 2009; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2018). However, many school teachers are left "culturally blind" by institutional training, personal experience or personal characteristics (Gay, 2010; Rychly & Graves, 2012).

For classroom teachers, culturally responsive teaching is different from traditional teaching in the following aspects (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009): the source of knowledge and skills are jointly amalgamated by teachers and students through their interaction and through reflection on subject matter and other issues; it includes learning content based on student experience and diversity; the learning environment is complex and is cooperatively managed by both the teachers and students; the outcomes are complex and emphasize understanding and competence to reorganize knowledge in ways that are comprehensible to the students. Culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipative (Banks, 2019; C. Banks, 2019; Bennett, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowsky, 2009; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2018). Therefore, the critical components of culturally responsive teaching are: (1) contextualized and culturally-based caring; (2) teacher-student communication; (3) a multicultural curriculum; (4) culturally congruent teaching and learning with multiple forms of assessment. The relevant theories and studies will be discussed below.

Contextualized and Culturally-based Caring

Caring is the first prerequisite in culturally responsive teaching and it consists of two crucial concepts -- contextualizing students based on their respective cultural backgrounds and establishing high expectations for student performance. The ethnically-diverse students also need a consistently caring and culturally sensitive environment to motivate them to engage in learning activities and tasks. Educators, however, should be aware of the variability of individual personalities, degrees of ethnic affiliation, and kinds of cultural experiences, and use this awareness to create an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom and school in consideration of the subjectivity of the students in addition to their ethnicity and personal experiences (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2018). Teachers should also understand that students could perform better when they are expected to do well because students comply with and internalize teacher expectations. Furthermore, teacher expectations are interconnected with their own feelings of efficacy, especially in relations to a diverse group of students. When teachers are competent and self-confident, they are inclined to have high expectations and teach effectively. In addition, Jackson (1994) suggested that building trust between the teacher and students is the primary strategy for engendering student success. That is, when teachers are caring, committed, competent, confident and content, they are better able to create an effective teaching and learning leveraging their students' intrinsic motivation (Gay, 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Teacher-student Communication

The second requirement for culturally responsive teaching is teacher-student communication appropriate for the use with students from diverse backgrounds. Such communication is dynamic, interactive, and contextual. Language is probably the strongest determinant in regards to whether a student recognizes what is happening in the classroom, and whether the content is relevant to his or her beliefs, needs and interests. Language could be used for negotiation to remove labels, and to help students develop their bilingual or multilingual competences (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009). Students from different backgrounds also have different communication styles (e.g., passive-perceptive or participative-interactive) and these influence their learning motivation and effect, and these affect student learning and knowledge construction (Gay, 2010; W. Lin, 2011). Students from topic-centered and topic-associative traditions also develop different ways of organizing ideas in discourse. The first tradition arranges ideas in a logical and linear order, while the latter is episodic, anecdotal and integrative. In addition, various ethnic groups may have different interpretations of the same symbols and signals, thus it is critical for educators to understand various communication styles and individual variations (Gay, 2010).

Multicultural Curriculum

The multicultural curriculum is the third critical component of the culturally responsive teaching, and has a great impact on the self-esteem and achievement of marginalized students. The mainstream school curriculum lacks sufficient ethnic and cultural diversity, and often implicitly conveys a certain degree of bias against minority students. To increase the positive ethnic identification and academic performance among minority students, it is essential to diversify curriculum content, confront prejudices in the curriculum, and create cultural continuity between home and school. Educators should be diligent in collaborating with scholars of various ethnic backgrounds, community leaders, and cultural brokers to ensure that curriculum content dealing with various ethnic groups is accurate and holistic. Various programs can be used to supplement the mainstream school curriculum and accommodate the learning styles of minority students to help them retain their cultural heritages and inspire their academic achievement. Therefore, to provide multicultural perspectives for their students, school teachers must develop cultural competences for the relevant cultures (Banks, 2019; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2018). Banks' four-levels of integration of multicultural content can help school teachers design and implement curricula for a transformative and social action-based approach to help mainstream and marginalized students learn issues from multiethnic perspectives, and take action to contribute to their communities (Banks, 2019). The multicultural curriculum is also open to the inclusion of other materials such as picture books, television programs and so on. The curricula should be relatively effective and be determined with input from students (Gay, 2010). Previous studies in the context of Taiwan have suggested that implementing a multicultural curriculum in the classroom increases the learning effects of the marginalized students (Lu, 2012).

Culturally Congruent Teaching and Learning

Praxis, the fourth dimension of culturally responsive teaching, reflects cultural congruity, learning styles and cognitive mapping in teaching, learning and assessment. Collaborative learning builds mutual trust and enhances the ability of each student to contribute. The multiple instructional strategies of multiple intelligences and diversified curricula also need to be implemented simultaneously to provide multiple stimulatory resources and to develop

the students' intrinsic motivation and strengths. Second, student learning styles may be field-dependent or field-independent. Children accustomed to field-dependent learning styles might be easily affected by their environment and prefer working collaboratively, while the latter would prefer to work individually. Therefore, it is important to understand individual student learning styles and adopt appropriate strategies. Third, school teachers need to increase the complexity of learned knowledge and encourage students to challenge the conventional understanding and norms with critical consciousness, thus empowering students through the use of appropriate inquiring techniques, instructional strategies and effective feedback (Jackson, 1994). Finally, multiple assessment formats drawing on multiple intelligences can help students with various talents to feel successful at school (Gay, 2010; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Taiwan New Immigrants tend to be disadvantaged and most of them hardly articulate for themselves. Little research has focused on the impact of such practices on NTCs, along with how new immigrant parents perceive their use.

Research Methodology

General Background

A qualitative research approach was chosen to have an in-depth understanding of the new immigrants' perspectives. Issues related to the perception of new immigrant parents in Taiwan regarding their children's education are a relatively recent concern. Given the language and cultural barriers between the author and potential interlocutors, an effort was made to learn the basics of their languages and become immersed in their cultures through ethnographic methods (Carspecken, 1996). Having previously lived abroad in a foreign culture for eight years helped the researcher be immersed in foreign cultures as the new immigrants were. In addition, it enabled the researcher to be culturally sensitive, and enhanced the researcher's competency interacting with the research subjects in ways that were respectful of their cultural sensitivities (Spindler, 1982).

Selection of Research Participants

To provide a comprehensive perspective of the immigrant experience, the maximum variation method was used to include a wide range of participants from different countries of Southeast Asia (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000). The research sites were mainly in the eastern, northern and southern parts of Taiwan, and twenty new immigrants were interviewed in September-December 2019. This study focused on recent female immigrants from Southeast Asia because such immigrants face a larger cultural gap, and their children face stronger preconceptions of being academic low-achievers (Chen, 2014). In addition, most new immigrants from Southeast Asia are females (88.33%) (MOI, 2020) who usually assume primary responsibility for childcare at home (Chen, 2010). Therefore, new immigrant females concerned with their children's education were identified as potential interviewees through schools, non-profit organizations (NPOs) and word of mouth. Three main criteria of recruiting participants were: (1) years of marriage between 11 to 20 years whose children were in primary school level or above, (2) the willingness of participating in various activities related to new immigrants, (3) demonstrating their concern about their children's schooling, and (4) still involving in various activities relevant to Taiwan New Immigrants even though their children are already in junior high school or above. Differences of age and marriage years of research participants are used to explore the similarities and differences of perceptions toward new immigrants and NTC of primary school teachers as well as teaching approach of primary school teachers prior to 2007,

2013-15 and 2019. These three stages and targets are described in the introduction section. Background information on participants quoted in the study is summarized below.

Profiles of Research Participants

Vietnamese A, 36-40 years old, had been married for 16-20 years through her husband's friend. Her two children are already in college. She dropped out of college in order to marry in Taiwan. Before working full time at the NPO, she worked as voluntary interpreter at the Immigration Office to help the disadvantaged Vietnamese immigrants. She also enjoyed working at the NPO, communities and schools as the cultural teacher to introduce Vietnamese language and culture to Taiwanese people.

Vietnamese B, 41-45 years old, had been married for 11-15 years through a marriage agency. Her two children were in senior high school and primary school. She also dropped out of college to marry in Taiwan. Having been a housewife for about 10 years, she decided to work as a factory laborer in order to meet friends and earn her own pocket money. On Saturdays, she taught Vietnamese language and culture at a primary school.

Vietnamese C was 31-35 years old with a college degree, and had been married for 11-15 years. She met her husband through a friend when she was an international migrant worker in a factory in Taiwan. Both of her children are in primary school. She was invited to teach Vietnamese language and culture at schools because of her college degree. She thus had a lot of interaction with school teachers.

Indonesian A, 31-35 years old, held a diploma of junior high school, and had been married for 11-15 years. Two of her children were in senior high school, and one was in primary school. She met her husband through a marriage agency. She mentioned that her father-in-law recommended her husband to marry her. She and her husband worked as voluntary interpreters at NPOs for several years to help new immigrants and promote multiculturalist ideas. Therefore, Indonesian A interacted with school teachers a lot too.

Indonesian B, 31-35 years old, held a diploma of junior high school, and had been married for 11-15 years. Her child was in primary school. She met her husband when she was an international migrant worker in Taiwan. Working as a laborer made her eager to participate in various activities related to new immigrants as a way of outlet from work. Her husband paid attention to her child's learning at school very much.

Cambodian A, 41-45 years old, held a diploma of primary school and had been married for 16-20 years. Her children were in junior high and senior high school. She met her husband through a marriage agency. Her Taiwanese family was proud of her loyalty and responsibility and thus she was urged by her Taiwanese family to study Mandarin Chinese and participated in various activities at her children's primary school.

Cambodian B, 41-45 years old, held a diploma of senior high school and had been married for 16-20 years. Her two children were in junior and senior high school. She met her husband through a friend. Working as a laborer helped her have insightful understanding of Taiwan's society, and thus she became a voluntary interpreter and cultural teacher whenever she was available.

Burmese A, 46-50 years old, held a junior high school diploma, and had been married for 16-20 years. Her two children were in junior and senior high school. She and her husband met through a marriage agency. Even though she did not know much Chinese, yet she was the parent taking care of children's schooling.

Thai A, 41-45 years old, held a diploma of junior high school, and had been married for 11-15 years. Her children were in primary and junior high school. She worked as a laborer and worked as a voluntary interpreter at the NPO to help out with the issues on new immigrants. In addition, she tried to participate in activities related to new immigrants.

Filipina A, 46-50 years old, had a college degree, and had been married for 16-20 years. Her children were in senior high school and college. Her female friend introduced her husband to her. She worked as a voluntary interpreter at the NPO, and was the main caretaker of her two children. She participated in activities relevant to new immigrants and went to parent-teacher meetings.

Brunei A, 51-55 years old, held a senior high school diploma, and had been married for 16-20 years. Her children were in senior high school and college. She and her husband met through a friend and became a housewife after marriage.

The participants and their Taiwanese families were informed that pseudonyms would be used instead of their actual names, and that their identities would be protected. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview questions focused on understanding the new immigrants' conceptions of the implementation of the culturally responsive teaching in schools.

Data Collection

Introductions were first made to potential research respondents through schools and non-governmental organizations working with new immigrants. Prior to data collection, the authors first made efforts to establish mutual trust with the research participants by means of visiting their family at home, conversing with them, helping them on children's educational issues, and so on. Most of their family members know about the researcher. The researcher participated in parties, various workshops, classes and events with new immigrants to solicit comments on school teachers' attempts to provide culturally responsive teaching, or lack thereof. The researcher also observed the parents' interaction with school teachers, with their children, with the other new immigrants or with Taiwanese people for triangulation. In addition, two research participants were invited to do member checks. The interviews were conducted in 2018 after the participants consented. The meeting time, length of interview, and place were in their convenience. Interviews were conducted in Taiwanese or Mandarin, using simple constructions and language and interviewees were prompted to ask questions whenever they didn't fully understand the questions. Each participant was asked the following questions:

- What is your perception of the teacher's attitude towards your child?
- What role do you play in the communication between your child and the teacher?
- Has the teacher designed any specific curriculum or material to help your child maintain his/her cultural heritage and develop a positive cultural identity?
- What teaching strategy does your child's teacher use to help your child succeed academically?

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in three steps. The first step was open-coding, with the researcher reading through all the data, creating within-case and cross-case data displays to examine the consistency of the various perspectives. Data was thus categorized to establish the themes of the findings. These displays also helped develop a holistic portrayal of the research findings. Other data were generated from impromptu involvement in social functions with the new immigrants and their families once the researcher had established trust, credibility, and a sense of connectedness with them. Following the open-coding and classification of the data, the themes were sequenced and meanwhile the logic and the structure of themes were determined primarily. In the third step, connections among the themes were identified and organized based on concepts which could illustrate the participants' perceptions of the culturally responsive teaching on NTC.

Research Results

The findings from this study were organized into four themes based on the critical components of the culturally responsive teaching and those emerged from the data analysis. The year or title of the project was presented to differentiate different stages and the societal atmosphere toward the new immigrants and NTC.

Caring of Taiwanese School Teacher towards NTC

Most participants reported that mainstream Taiwanese values influenced teacher attitudes toward their children and some teachers still held various prejudices against new immigrants and NTC especially prior to 2007, the New Taipei City Torch Project. All new immigrants in this study experienced linguistic and cultural shocks upon arriving in Taiwan. This was especially true for those who finished high school or university in their home country. In Taiwanese public schools, students are expected to take turns performing some routine cleaning and maintenance tasks. According to interviews, some teachers were discriminated against NTC by assigning less-desirable tasks to NTC. For example, Vietnamese B said that, for two years, her son was made solely responsible for cleaning toilets. When they received unfair treatment, the new immigrant parents usually explained it to the NTC as a result of one of their parents being a “foreign spouse” and that the NTC should tolerate such prejudices against them.

The research participants reported that Prior to 2007, difficulties on the part of new immigrants in adjusting to Taiwanese society and culture, along with their low proficiency in reading and writing Chinese, were often mistakenly assumed to be indicators of low intelligence, and thus NTC were assumed to be low-achieving students. These perceptions might negatively influence the school teachers, leaving educators inclined to believe that NTC needed extra help to achieve similar performance levels with native Taiwanese children. New immigrant parents were pleased with the provision of after-school programs, yet they resisted the negative perception of their children as low-achievers. Thus, some new immigrant parents were reluctant to identify themselves as immigrants. One new immigrant noted,

I don't want my daughter's teacher to know that her mother is from Vietnam. If she knows, my daughter will be stigmatized and forced to join the after-school program to improve her academic performance. Teachers tend to consider all new immigrants to be illiterate and difficult to teach... Fortunately, there are workshops and TV programs on lived experiences of the new immigrants. These help Taiwanese teachers to understand us (new immigrants) better and decrease the prejudices. (Vietnamese A)

The immigrants mentioned that the negative attitude from Taiwanese family members and the greater society of Taiwan might affect teachers' perception on the NTC. Some immigrants recalled a news item in 2010 about a junior high school teacher who had scolded and sarcastically suggested the child return to Indonesia as an indication that discrimination is still a significant issue. A participant critiqued,

Taiwanese people think we are poor. You know, my mother-in-law said, that they had purchased me. Most Taiwanese people despise their foreign daughter-in-law. Most Taiwanese people don't take this attitude. Yet some teachers still do such as that one in the news who scolded and yelled at the Taiwanese-Indonesian student to return to Indonesia. This is horrible! (Thai A)

This idea of “poverty” of Southeast Asia might be annoyed to new immigrants from Brunei which is more prosperous than Taiwan as a new immigrant said,

Brunei economy is better than Taiwan. The government subsidizes their citizens a lot, such as electricity and study. The government sends citizens to study abroad. The air conditioner is on 24 hours because of the subsidy of the government. Automobile gasoline is cheaper than Taiwan because of subsidy. (Brunei A)

In Taiwanese public schools, students are expected to take turns performing some routine cleaning and maintenance tasks. According to interviews, some teachers are discriminated against NTC by assigning less-desirable tasks to NTC. For example, Vietnamese B said that, for two years, her son was made solely responsible for cleaning toilets. When they received unfair treatment, the new immigrant parents usually explained it to the NTC as a result of one of their parents being a “foreign spouse” and that the NTC should tolerate such prejudices against them. In spite, most immigrants recognized the sincerity of teachers who were concerned about NTC a lot, especially after the Torch Project in 2013-15. A new immigrant stated,

My daughter’s teachers try to help us appropriately to maintain our dignity. All of the teachers know me, including the principal. They are indeed nice (smile). The school is very good. (Cambodian A)

Importantly, the interviewees all agreed that the attitude toward the new immigrant were improved gradually in recent 10 years because of the policy of promoting multiculturalist sense at school, community, media and society in general. The Torch Project (2013-15) played a critical role to recruit new immigrants as the language and cultural teachers at school. Many multicultural festivals held by schools, local and central government were significant. The media, such as “We Are Family” demonstrated the abilities and contribution of new immigrants and enhanced the respect to the new immigrants too. Those who still have children studying at primary school mentioned that current school teachers appreciated their children’s bilingual and bicultural background. When the new immigrant languages were determined to be offered at primary schools, the school teachers encouraged the NTC to cherish this special linguistic and cultural capital. Most interviewees indicated that the quality of Taiwanese teachers and school facilities were much better than those in their homelands. Most also expressed appreciation for the efforts of some teachers to make their children feel welcomed as a new immigrant described below:

My daughter’s teacher asked her to help the other students. This increased her self-confidence a lot. I haven’t seen any discrimination against my daughter. She is happy at school. My son likes his teacher, too. Their teachers treat them equally....My children’s junior high school teachers visited us (her and her husband) once or two times a semester to ensure my children are doing fine. Also, teachers help in my children’s career plan. (Indonesian A)

The new immigrants expressed appreciation for the efforts the Taiwanese teachers made to improve their children’s academic performance. Nonetheless, the new immigrants were also conscious that negative perceptions against the new immigrants and NTC persisted, especially prior to 2007. Even so, they were glad that most Taiwanese school teachers gradually developed positive impression on the NTC.

Language and Non-Verbal Communication Style

In terms of languages, Mandarin Chinese is the instructional language and might communicate in local language(s), such as Holo and Hakka. The mother tongue of the new immigrants was never used for communication at school. As a matter of fact, most Taiwanese teachers did not encourage the NCT to learn about their mother’s mother tongue until the Torch Project because the greater Taiwan society did not consider Southeast Asian languages as

important as English, German, French, Spanish, Japanese or Korean. Even worse, they might mistake the official language of some countries such as that for the Philippines. Filipina A said, “Tagalog is the official language in Philippines, NOT English. School should offer Tagalog as the mother tongue too.”

Fortunately, since the autumn semester 2019, the new immigrants’ mother tongue should be offered in primary school level, according to the *2019 Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education*. As long as one NTC has desire to learn, the school has to employ the language teacher as a new immigrant described:

The mother tongue education in Taiwan is getting better. Now, the Vietnamese language is taught at school to help our (Vietnamese) children to learn about Vietnamese. This will help our children to have more opportunities in future career, they will be able to communicate with their Vietnamese grandparents, and this might help them in career. (Vietnamese B)

In terms of non-verbal communication, new immigrants usually conformed to the local majority cultural values and practices, despite the potential for cross-cultural confusion and misunderstanding. For example, in Vietnamese culture, teachers or parents punish children by making them assume a posture called “*khoanh tay*” in which the child places both hands against his or her own chest, but in Taiwan such a gesture could be misinterpreted as an indication of resistance or arrogance. To avoid their children giving teachers a negative impression through the use of this gesture, parents aware of the potential confusion avoided teaching it to their children. Two new immigrants shared their thoughts:

The teachers haven’t been to Cambodia yet. How could they know about our communication style? We live in Taiwan; we should follow Taiwanese style...It is too difficult for teachers. (Cambodian A)

New immigrants are from different countries, how can a teacher know so much? I am from Ho Chi Minh City. Sometimes I don’t even understand the Hanoi Vietnamese and their interaction style. How could I expect Taiwanese teachers to know about the Vietnamese communication style? My husband told me not to teach my kids otherwise teachers might be confused, such as “*khoanh tay*” (having both hands on the chest while being punished) and lead teachers to regard my children as rebellious. (Vietnamese C)

Therefore, new immigrant parents had no expectation that Taiwanese teachers would learn foreign communication styles. They internalized the perception of “foreignness” and justified the situation by citing the limited knowledge Taiwanese teachers had of their native languages and communication styles.

However, some new immigrants suggested they felt that Southeast Asians are more social and gregarious, and are more inclined to show friendship through teasing. Taiwanese people, they noted, tended to be more independent and usually work alone. Still, they had no expectation that their children’s teachers would change their teaching style to accommodate their children especially when the style, e.g., “*khoanh tay*” is extremely confusing to Taiwanese people.

Ethnic Diverse and Cultural Curriculum Partially Implemented

Participants informed that Southeast Asian languages had been taught in schools and multicultural events had been held for several years. However, new immigrants were usually the language and culture teachers because Taiwanese teachers lack the proficiency of Southeast Asian languages. New immigrants observed that their cultures are largely ignored in school

textbooks, but the Torch Project prompted several teachers to design supplementary materials to help their NTC students learn about the languages and cultures of their new immigrant parents. As mentioned above, the *2019 Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education* adds “new immigrant languages” as one of the must-offered languages at school, and multicultural education becomes one particular educational issue, which needs to be integrated in the formal curriculum beginning in autumn semester 2019 (MOEb, 2020). In addition, school food festivals and government-sponsored “International Multicultural Day” events have provided opportunities for NTC to learn about their immigrant mothers’ cultures. Parents also noted that their children’s teachers had attended workshops related to multicultural education or Southeast Asian societies and cultures, even though they had not observed the ethnic diverse or cultural curriculum implemented by the school teachers. Nonetheless, given that their Taiwanese husbands and family members showed little interest in learning about their native languages and cultures, the new immigrant parents had limited expectations that school teachers would take an active interest as two new immigrants stated,

Well, we are in Taiwan, and we just need to accept what is offered at school. However, it would be great if my children could learn Burmese language and culture at school. Then, they will be willing to learn from me at home. (Burmese, A)

I am Muslim. It is too mysterious to Taiwanese people. It is OK that Indonesia isn’t presented in the textbook. Anyway, Taiwanese people regard Indonesia as poor and under-developed.... However, I am so glad that Ramadan (fasting month) has been celebrated in different cities in recent years. In 2017, the Taipei City initiated to celebrate the Festival of Fast-breaking (Eid al-Fitr) to demonstrate their friendliness to Muslims. Afterwards, many cities followed and held celebration activities. Muslims had to hide their identity before. (Indonesian B)

Generally speaking, the school teachers seldom participated in the activities related to the new immigrants, let alone designed new supplementary teaching materials to cater to their needs. However, attending workshops related to the education of NTC was popular among teachers. Some new immigrants speculated this was because Taiwan society tends to perceive Southeast Asia as under-developed and poor, and this lack of perceived prestige discouraged teachers from developing an interest in the particular needs of the NTC.

Culturally Congruent Teaching Determined by Teachers

New immigrants indicated they felt that “sameness is equity”, and the high status of teachers in their home countries inclined them to treat Taiwanese school teachers with considerable respect. They were afraid that teachers would find special requests inappropriate or burdensome, and thus incline them to discriminate against their children. They also regarded Taiwanese education as superior to that in their home countries. Thus, the new immigrants in general were happy to have their children receive the same education as “Taiwanese” children. This was their way of “fairness” between TC and NTC. As a participant said,

My husband and I are happy that the teachers teach our children the same as Taiwanese Children. It means they (teachers) are fair. We don’t want to make any request to the teachers. In my homeland, if we do, my children might be punished or ignored by teachers. (Cambodian A)

However, those who had vision to see the benefits of their children becoming bilingual and bicultural had different expectations as a new immigrant mentioned,

We hope our children's teachers could teach them the same and differently. "Teaching them the same" means to teach my children whatever the Taiwanese children have to learn. "Teaching them differently" means to emphasize their "foreign" heritage from their mother side. By teaching them so, my children will be superior to Taiwanese children because they have Taiwanese and Vietnamese sides. (Vietnamese C)

Furthermore, most new immigrants instructed their children to defer to their teachers, and avoided asking teachers to pay special attention to their children's style of interaction, though in interviews they indicated that they preferred a participative-interactive style, which would increase the learning motivation and make their children energetic in class. Vietnamese C mentioned, "It was a good method to avoid falling asleep in class. Ha!"

As for topic-centered or topic-associative orientation for the NTC, most parents deferred to the teachers' professional knowledge. In fact, few had considered questioning the teachers' decisions or methods, given their own lack of educational background. Some new immigrants, however, critiqued the emphasis the Taiwanese education system places on drill and memorization and the general lack of play time, along with the limited time left over for family interaction as a participant commented,

It is important for children to learn well, but there must be methods wherein children can learn well without so much homework. Oh, Lord, there's so much homework. I want to have some time to talk to my children each day. (Vietnamese B)

New immigrant parents observed that schools in Taiwan offered a greater variety of assessment methods than were used in their home countries, and they appreciated that school teachers acknowledged the various types of intelligences of their children in teaching or grading. They appreciated the range and variety of assignments, including cultivating green bean sprouts, helping with household chores, making their own portfolios, and so on. Some children were assigned to interview parents about their life experiences, and such efforts to involve parents in the children's assignments were something of a novelty. As a new immigrant mentioned,

The teacher makes different assignments, including helping parents clean the house. A part-time teacher, who only teaches once a week, encourages my daughter to read books about my home country and write papers about the books. The teacher then gives my daughter extra credit. (Cambodian B)

To sum up, the new immigrants regarded Taiwanese education as generally being of a higher quality than that in their homelands, including teaching methods and assessment methods. However, they did not think Taiwanese teachers integrated their cultural heritage with the school curriculum or paid attention to their children's learning styles.

Discussion

The research findings indicated that most school teachers took a personal interest in their NTC. The new immigrants sensed the government's promotion of multicultural programs, in particular the Torch Project, then move on to the *2019 Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education* helped Taiwanese school teachers to gradually develop a better understanding of their students' needs, and reduced feelings of antipathy. The new immigrants, however, were aware that discrimination would remain a fact of life in Taiwan, and certainly had a negative effect on certain school teachers, occasionally leading to incidents such as that reported earlier in which the teacher suggested a student return to Indonesia (Lin, 2010). Despite this, the new

immigrants expressed genuine appreciation for the policies and programs designed to promote multicultural education, and saw these efforts as a means of developing a more welcoming environment for new immigrants and their children. Most importantly, to avoid discrimination and provide the most effective assistance to students, school teachers or organizations should provide help based on the needs of individuals, rather than on the ethnic background of the student's parents (Chen, 2010).

The new immigrant parents had no expectation that Taiwanese school teachers would be familiar with their verbal or non-verbal communication styles. This could be related to their experiences in their homelands, where school teachers had no obligations to learn about the students' heritage. In Taiwan, because of the requirement of *2019 Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education* school teachers have been encouraged to learn about new immigrants' languages and cultures. In terms of the non-verbal communication, Taiwanese school teachers are still not ready to adjust their communication styles to accommodate classroom diversity, possibly because most Taiwanese school teachers are Han-Taiwanese, members of the Taiwanese mainstream culture.

Taiwanese school teachers are more inclined to develop multicultural curricula than prior to 2013 because of the local perceptions of Southeast Asian countries as being underdeveloped and mysterious, such as Islamic Indonesia and communist Vietnam. Notwithstanding, new immigrant parents have no expectations that Taiwanese school teachers would design supplemental multicultural learning materials for their children because doing so would require certain cultural knowledge and experiences which they would not expect local teachers to have. Teaching materials related to Southeast Asian cultures have only recently encouraged, especially the economic development in Southeast Asian and the New Southbound Policy initiated by Taiwan government in 2016 (MOE, 2020a). The development of a transformative curriculum and social action curriculum, however, could take considerable time to implement. Despite offering new immigrant languages at school, multicultural events, additive multicultural materials, new immigrants feel their cultures are still largely invisible, and new immigrants feel culturally empowered.

As for culturally congruent teaching, new immigrants indicated they wanted their children to receive equal treatment with their peers in the classroom. This could originate from their learning experiences in their homelands, wherein equal treatment symbolized equity. Treating students the same, actually does not represent educational equity-- students from different cultural backgrounds should be educated based on their individual cognitive and cultural characteristics (Nieto, 2018). In addition, some new immigrant parents regarded the cultural values and practices as well as educational quality of their homelands as being inferior to that in Taiwan. Therefore, they were inclined to accept what were the practices of Taiwanese school teachers without question. Prior to the initiation of the Torch Project in 2013-15, the MOE and MOI offered a limited range of multicultural education programs for school teachers, focusing on introducing aspects of society and culture in certain Southeast Asian countries. Most of these programs consisted primarily of lectures, and few involved teachers in curriculum design exercises or teaching demonstrations. Furthermore, the cultural values or world views are not widely discussed in the Taiwanese classroom, and a more comprehensive multicultural curriculum for NTC is still lacking (Chen & Lin, 2012; M. Liu & Lin, 2011). As for teaching and assessment strategies, school teachers could motivate NTC to learn about their "foreign" heritages by incorporating them into daily classroom teaching, homework assignments and assessments. For example, the teachers could encourage students to learn a phrase from the NTC's parent's language and write it down in their home-school liaison notebooks (*jiating lianluobu*). The content of social studies classes consistently initiates from the background of the individual students' family members and communities. School teachers could assign students to learn about the life stories, children's games, and songs of their parents'

native cultures. Therefore, motivating mainstream school teachers to learn about the cultures of marginalized students integrate such knowledge into their lessons is an urgent goal.

The NTC with cultural heritages could be actively developed as an advantage if their families and schools are able to encourage exposure to their cultural heritages (Chen, 2012). Lacking such efforts, however, the uniqueness of hybridity might lead to the development of social and educational obstacles. This research indicates that the multicultural-oriented policy raises the awareness of Taiwanese school teachers to the issues related to new immigrants and their children, and has gradually improved their interaction with NTC in their classrooms. The Torch Project is focused solely on primary schools. The positive impact of the project has extended to *2019 Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education* incorporating the new immigrant languages as a subject in language arts. Notwithstanding, the idea of transformative curriculum proposed by J. Banks (2019) is still not demonstrated in *2019 Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education*. This shows Taiwan society and educators are not ready for intergroup dialogues. During flexible curriculum, school teachers actually could invite community members, parents and students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to have intergroup dialogues to increase the mutual understanding as a way of the transformative curriculum (J. Banks, 2019, Nagda, et. al. 2009). More importantly, school teachers, students and parents could further respect and appreciate each other to work together (Nieto, 2018). Empowering the children of new immigrants and improving their circumstances requires policies which foster culturally responsive caring and effective communication, along with multicultural curricula and instructional materials.

Limitations and Future Research

This study suffers from certain limitations. First, the study focused on the subjective perception of new immigrant parents to culturally responsive teaching for their children, but did not account for teachers' opinions, and future research needs account for these voices. Second, the interview subjects were largely immigrant women, but the opinion of their Taiwanese husbands was not expressed. While the new immigrants are the disadvantaged group, it is still essential to explore the perceptions of the children of Taiwanese fathers because, in Taiwan society, they are usually the household decision-makers. In addition, the educational expectations of the NTC's Taiwanese grandparents should be accounted for in the discussion of the new immigrants' language and cultural transmission to the NTC. In rural areas, particularly where extended families usually live under one roof, the grandparents have a critical influence on the NTC's education. Future investigations, therefore, must determine whether culturally responsive teaching would meet the expectations of the NTC's Taiwanese family.

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