

# Research on the Current Situation of Second Language Teaching in Primary Schools in Baoding, China

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**Abstract** In China, English is taught as a second language from the third grade of primary school as a compulsory subject, but the English language proficiency of most pupils has not been significantly improved. The study of second language acquisition is gaining more and more influence in China and many students are enrolled in private institutions for extra-curricular lessons. This research uses case study, analyzing available statistics, interviews, questionnaire research methods to investigate English teaching in primary schools in Baoding. Through the information collected, the teaching methods were analyzed, teaching materials and challenges faced by teachers in teaching a second language were discussed. The motivation and level of second language acquisition were also discussed, and finally some suggestions were put forward for improvement of teaching English as a second language learning.

**Keywords** China Baoding city primary school students, English as a second language, Foreign languages, Second language teaching

## 1. Introduction

As English is the current international language of communication, many academic researchers and scholars have been paying more attention to how best to carry out English teaching, and widely adopt interdisciplinary research methods. The second language learning research represented by English learning has reached a high level. Many researches are being carried out world-wide on how best to teach English as a second/foreign language. China is one of the countries where English is a dominant second language and many researches are being done on how to improve English proficiency from a young age (Grace Yue Qi, 2016). A second language refers to a language that an individual learns in addition to his native language (Second Language Acquisition). Second language acquisition was included in the field of academic research, starting in the late 1960s, and related researchers analyzed the process and laws of second language learning through research methods such as sociology, psychology, pedagogy, and linguistics (L.Q Dixon, J. Zhao et al, 2012). At present, the research on second language acquisition mainly focuses on three aspects: interlanguage theory, internal dominant factors of learners and external influence factors of learners. Related scholars have successively put forward the Input hypothesis, the

Interaction hypothesis, and the Output hypothesis, that is, to improve the level of learners through second language input with appropriate difficulty and intelligibility, and through positive and moderate second language interaction awaken language memory, strengthen language comprehensive use level through mandatory second language output (William Littlewood, 2000).

Nowadays, people are more and more aware of the importance of testing the effectiveness of second language acquisition method, quality and practice. In addition to this, it has also been proven that diverse methods are used to teach foreign languages to children all over the world. Interaction is crucial in second language learning practice. Students must not only have the ability to learn independently, but also must participate in interactive activities, cooperate with peers, and generate some interdependence. In addition, teacher-student interaction is also very important. The process of interaction between students and teachers can reflect students' processing of language information problems. Teachers can provide immediate feedback on improvement suggestions or give reinforcements, which can effectively correct errors in students' learning. Context has become one of the basic factors in learning foreign languages, including social, communicative, linguistic and cultural backgrounds (G.W Hu & Y.Q Gu 2012).

(Diane Larsen-Freeman, 2011) Language Teaching Techniques and Principles, method is the link between thought and action. "A method is, in a sense, a coherent set of such links, between which there should be some theoretical

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or philosophical compatibility". Teaching is psychological and social at the same time. The complexity is even greater when language teaching becomes a special focus, depending on teachers' perceptions of the nature of language, language teaching and learning in general, and their knowledge of the specific sociocultural environment in which they teach. (Jeremy Harmer, 2010) believes that the key to a successful teaching method is a few specific elements or characteristics. These elements are "engage", "learn" and "activate".

## 2. Current English Status in China

At the beginning of the 21st century, the reform of English teaching and English curriculum in China caused wider and in-depth discussions. On January 18, 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the "Guiding Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Actively Promoting the Opening of English Courses in Primary Schools"(China Education and Research Network website). The state attaches great importance to English teaching at the basic stage. The "English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education" has been revised several times. From the 2001 version, the 2011 version to the 2022 version, the Ministry of Education has revised and improved the curriculum plan and standards. However, there are many problems in the actual situation of English teaching in primary schools in China. Many students who have studied English for more than ten years are still unable to conduct simple conversations in English, the so-called "dumb English". Some English teachers cannot communicate in English, teaching methods are outdated, English teaching is also hindered by the lack of qualified teachers and appropriate teaching materials, etc.

According to the 2011 English curriculum standards, primary school students were expected to meet level 2 standards by the time they finish their primary level (D Zhang 2012). In level 1 (grade 3 and 4), students were expected to recognise words printed with pictures, read words they would have learned loudly, reading and understanding short picture stories and also being able to write all these words. In level 2 students were expected to be able to recognise words and short sentences they have learned, be able to read using phonics rules and be able to follow instructions in the textbooks they use. This focus was more on knowing what is in the textbook more than being able to communicate and comprehend what they are being taught. The goal is to memorise what's in the book.

According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2022), there was a revision which aimed to improve the Education system in order to develop students' ideals and abilities. This new curriculum standards allows districts to use different types of texts to integrate learning requirements for language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills and learning strategies (MOE 2022). Since this research is focusing on primary English education, the content requirements of text types according to the new curriculum standards are as follows:

1. Children's rhythms
2. Monologues and short everyday dialogues
3. Illustrated stories and narrative diaries
4. Introduction to people, things and places
5. Letters, event notices, birthday and new year cards and restaurant menus.

For assessment, the curriculum states that the assessment should be motivation led and should be designed to make the students to speak more and participate in learning activities, therefore teachers are encouraged to focus on children's classroom performance and their participation. However, according to the discoveries of this research, the students focus more on memorising contents of their textbooks for a better classroom result.

Although English language is widely valued in primary education, the English language level of primary school students in China does not seem to have been significantly improved. There are many reasons for the low foreign language level of primary school students in China. Some of the reasons are as follows; The impact of cultural environment. Chinese primary school students are limited to the basic English knowledge and daily oral English they learn in class. In Baoding public primary schools, they are still using old text books with very limited content. There is no applied language environment in real life. The knowledge cannot be used and strengthened. In small cities like Baoding the uneven quality of teachers also affects the development of students' language learning. Some teachers' English level needs to be improved because their oral pronunciation is not standard, which greatly restricts the development of students' English learning. In addition, students' foreign language classes are extremely limited.

## 3. Significance of Study

This study aims to gain a more complete understanding of how China has developed its foreign language education, especially at the primary level, by examining the foreign language education system and current foreign language curriculum in order to draw conclusions about the useful experiences and lessons in foreign language education. Generally speaking, among the students studying English in Baoding city of China, only a few primary school students can speak English well. Students appear to take longer than expected to acquire a second language. The main problem with students is listening and speaking. Most of the students who are learning English as a second language in primary schools can introduce themselves, but cannot carry out daily conversations, but their reading and writing skills are significantly good. Most students do not have confidence in expressing themselves using English. So, this study will try to answer the following questions; What are the main reasons for these problems? Is it a textbook or learning materials being used? Is it the teaching methods? Is it a learning environment? Is it social interaction?

Many students say they lack confidence in the foreign

language they are learning, despite their large English language vocabulary. This research will also focus on how to improve students' confidence in speaking in a foreign language. As any language learner knows, when learning and using a new language, they often make mistakes in front of others, which is a necessary stage in the learning process. Learning a new language means putting yourself in an unfamiliar language environment, stepping out of your comfort zone, the body and mind need to experience unknown pressures and challenges, and the potential benefit is that you will feel amazing when talking to a native speaker and it brings a sense of achievement. The many cognitive benefits of learning a language are undeniable. People who speak more than one language can improve memory, concentration, foreign language listening, exercise multi-angle problem-solving ability, and benefit the cultivation and development of critical thinking ability. Compared to monolinguals, they were more likely to switch between multiple work tasks and monitor changes in their environment, showing greater creativity and flexibility. Additionally, being bilingual or multilingual can also help avoid mental aging and cognitive decline as you age.

#### Requirements for English teachers in Baoding

According to Hebei Province Education Bureau 2023(where Baoding city is located), In order to promote the development of education in its region, the requirements for one to become an English teacher include the following: One must have reached the age of 18 and must have graduated from a secondary school or above. Teachers are required to have a National English teacher qualification Certificate which is acquired through examination writing. The examination includes English knowledge and ability tests which is divided into four sections which are listening, language knowledge, reading and writing. It is important to note that these examinations are not international standard but are set only for Chinese English teachers. The standard requirements for one to become an English teacher are relatively low and this compromises the quality of English teaching in schools already. Most schools in China use traditional teaching methods.

#### Traditional teaching methods

In spite of the task based teaching approach and improvement in communication required by the national curriculum (MOE 2022), the reality in classrooms is that the teachers still follow the traditional way of teaching which is exam oriented. According to Chuxuan Duan (2023), the traditional way of teaching English in Chinese public schools is through grammar translation technique, systematic analysis of grammar, memorizing words and putting more concentration on reading and writing. This is mainly because a pass in English is required in Entrance examination in high school and college. Therefore most of the students who become teachers would have studied English for the purpose of passing the exams and this tradition continues to be passed to the students being taught.

## 4. Research Methods

A case study was used to gather data for this research. In order to understand the current situation and problems of second language teaching for primary school students in Baoding City, Hebei Province, China, this research used the case study method and the form of focus groups to survey 29 primary school students and 18 teachers from different primary schools around in Baoding City. There was use of questionnaires, interviews, use of the schools' assessment records to collect data, conduct non-participatory classroom observations to collect the actual situation of primary school English classrooms, conduct questionnaire interviews with teachers and students to evaluate students' English proficiency, use literature (secondary source) method to collect relevant journal articles and analyse Chinese foreign language teaching policies, etc. At the same time, Chinese teachers' evaluations of students and parents' opinions were taken into consideration in the research.

For students, from grade 1 to grade 6, a class was chosen in each grade, and the age of students ranges from 6 to 12 years old. General questions like self introduction and things they like and eat were asked since it is part of their syllabus. Questions such as "time and place of first contact with English", "why do you want to learn and speak English" and "difficulties in learning English" were also asked. Since the questionnaire was designed in English, considering that some students could not answer all the questions on the questionnaire, students were asked to answer the questions in the form of interviews. In terms of teachers, a sample survey was adopted, and the questionnaire asked some basic information of teachers, such as age, education background, major, and teaching experience, focusing on teachers' teaching situation, teacher training, curriculum design, and use of teaching materials and difficulties facing English teachers.

**Table 1.** Thematic Analysis Procedures

Procedure	Description of procedure
1. Get familiar with data	Transcribe the data, read and re-read the data, make a preliminary arrangement
2. Generate initial material	Systematically analyze and code its features in the entire dataset, then organize the data associated with each feature.
3. Search Topics	Organize the code into potential topics and collect all the data related to each potential topic.
4. Review Topics	Check if topics are relevant to the coding extraction group (each student group and teacher) and the entire dataset (all student groups), generating a topic "map" for analysis.
5. Define and Name Topics	Continue the analysis to refine the details of each topic as well as analyze the overall context of what is being told, generating clear definitions and names for each topic.
6. Produce report Final analysis opportunity	Select vivid and engaging excerpt examples, conduct a final analysis of the selected excerpts, link the analysis to the research question and literature, and generate a scholarly report of the analysis.

For data collection and analysing, the author used Thematic analysis procedure which is described in the table above.

In order to protect the identities of respondents, English names are used instead of students' real names. The information for teachers is coded as follows, school 1 teacher 1 (S1 T1), school 1 teacher 2 (S1 T2), school 2 teacher 1 (S2 T1), and so on. The following tables shows the information of students and teachers who participated in the survey.

**Table 2.** Students' information from 3 schools

Students' names	Age	grade	School
Sunny	9	3	First school
Dora	9	3	First school
Roger	9	3	First school
Monica	9	3	First school
Tina	9	3	First School
Ricky	9	3	First school
Peter	9	3	First school
Happy	9	3	First school
Emily	9	3	First school
Betty	9	3	First school
Joy	9	3	Second school
Jessica	9	3	Second school
Lilly	10	4	Second school
Rose	9	3	Second school
Lisa	9	3	Second school
James	11	5	Second school
Run	11	5	Second school
May	11	5	Second school
Tony	11	5	Second school
Tia	7	1	Third school
Alice	7	1	Third school
Amy	6	1	Third school
Hunter	7	1	Third school
Apple	7	1	Third school
Eddy	8	2	Third school
Harry	8	2	Third school
Susan	8	2	Third school
Anna	8	2	Third school
Max	7	2	Third school

A total of 29 students from three schools participated in the survey, and the survey showed different results regarding the time and place of their first exposure to English.

The first school investigated 10 students who were nine-year-old third graders. Dora, Roger, Betty, and Tina were exposed to English in the kindergarten aged 3 to 5 years old. Among them, Dora, Roger and Tina were also exposed to English in private English training schools. Sunny and Monica started learning English when they were in the first grade (ages 6-7) in private English training schools; Ricky, Peter, Happy and Emily started learning English for the first time in the third grade (ages 8-9).

At the second school, a total of 9 students participated in the survey. Joy, Jessica, Rose and Lisa were 3rd graders and they were all 9 years old; Lilly was 10 years old and was in 4th grade; James, Run, May and Tony were in the 5th Grade and they were all 11 years old. Their time and place of first exposure to English class Survey results are as follows: Lilly, Rose, James were in first grade, Joy was 3 years old in kindergarten, Jessica, Run and Tony were 5 years old in private English training school, Lisa was 6 years old in online English lessons.

A total of 10 students from the third school participated in the survey, one of whom was a foreign student. Tia, Alice, Amy, Hunter and Apple are first graders, Amy is 6 and the other 4 students are 7 years old; Eddy, Harry, Susan, Anna and Max are second graders and are 8 years old. Among the students, only two students started to learn English at school, and the remaining seven students started to learn English from kindergarten, mostly at the age of 3-5.

Teachers' information

**Table 3.** Information for teachers from the first school

Name	Age	Highest level of education	Years of experience	Sex
S1 T1	40	Bachelor degree	19years	F
S1 T2	24	Bachelor degree	2 years	F
S1 T3	23	Undergraduate	1 year	F
S1 T4	43	Bachelor degree	18 years	F
S1 T5	37	Bachelor degree	18years	F
S1 T6	38	Master degree	15years	F

**Table 4.** Information for teachers from the second school

Name	Age	Highest level of education	Years of experience	Sex
S2 T1	32	Bachelor degree	8	F
S2 T2	35	College certificate	13	F
S2 T3	45	-	20	F
S2 T4	-	-	8	F
S2 T5	34	Bachelor degree	4	F
S2 T6	29	Bachelor degree	5	F

**Table 5.** Information for teachers from the third school

Name	Age	Highest level of education	Years of experience	Sex
S3 T1	35	Bachelor degree	18	F
S3 T2	33	Master degree	13	F
S3 T3	23	Bachelor degree	1	F
S3 T4	26	-	1	F
S3 T5	28	Bachelor degree	2	F
S3 T6	31	Bachelor degree	5	F

## 5. Results

### *Survey results of second language learning among primary school students in Baoding*

The first school in Baoding, Hebei Province investigated in this paper is an ordinary public school located in a densely populated area, where students start learning English from the third grade. The second school, a prestigious public school in a medium-density suburb, offers English courses in the first grade and employs foreign teachers as English teachers. The third school surveyed was also a public school that started to set up English courses in the first grade of primary school.

#### *School classroom observation results*

The classes observed in this study were the third grade classes in the first school. There were 50 students in each class. The authors sat in the back of the classroom as non-participants observers in the actual teaching activities of the classroom. The content of the observed lesson was animals and their behaviour, focusing on how animals that can run, jump, and swim and speak sentences in the plural. For example: "A bird can fly/ Birds can fly." When explaining the above sentence structure, the teacher explained it in Chinese. While practicing sentences, students said the sentences in groups. Students were praised for giving correct answers. Most of the time, the teacher was communicating in English. The teacher repeated new words and sentences so that students can master them. After about 25 minutes, the teacher came up with a new topic. The new topic introduced by the teacher was "I can....". The first section was to ask a question that the student knew how to answer. For example: "Can a dog swim? Yes, it can. Can you sing? Yes, I can" Because this was a completely new topic for students, they make a lot of mistakes. For example; students mix "it" and "I". To reinforce the practice, the students recited the pronunciation of the words and sentences they had just learned several times. At the end of the class, the teacher reviewed what they had learned.

There was a lot of interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom. The teacher also had the awareness of using information technology and used clear PPT courseware. Most of the class was devoted to review and practice so that students can better grasp the knowledge. Towards the end, there were also reading and writing exercises. If the student did not understand the question, the teacher explained the prompts in Chinese.

#### *Survey results on the use of school textbooks*

Among the three schools surveyed, the first school and the third school use the same English textbook stipulated by the Ministry of Education: "Compulsory Education Textbook ENGLISH", published by Hebei Education Publishing House in cooperation with Canada DC Canada International Exchange Centre. The contents of the third-grade textbook are as follows: 1. Animals on the farm 2. Animals at the zoo 3. Food and meals. 4. Food and restaurants. The contents of the book are all written in English. In the vocabulary section at the end of the book, there are English words for each unit. These words are translated into Chinese to facilitate students' understanding. There are also parts in the book about phonics, which are not

the whole alphabet, but just a few selected consonants, "m,n,s,z,r,c,y".

The second school in the survey used a different English textbook published by Cambridge, UK, called the kids box. The textbook was introduced to schools in 2012 and is used from the first grade. Comparing this textbook to the one mentioned above, students can learn more new vocabulary and grammar; at the same time, there are some simple math content for students to learn numbers and basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; the book also includes listening the audio for practice, the reading pen is used for students' listening practice, helping students to pronounce correctly and improving their listening skills. The teachers of the second school believed that the textbooks they used were rich in content, beautifully illustrated and easy to understand, while the textbooks stipulated by the government were already "outdated" and could not provide high-quality English courses for primary school students.

#### *Student Survey Interview Results*

When the students were interviewed, there was a big gap in the way students answered questions. Some students answered very well, some students only answered one word and could not answer in complete sentences; some students needed teachers to translate the questions first, and then they can answer. It is clear from this interview that different students have different exposure times and levels of English. Most students were able to answer questions from their textbooks but anything not in the textbooks, they were not able to answer. This might be due to the traditional teaching methods commonly used in public schools

#### *(b) Reasons why students learn English*

The results of the survey of primary school students in these three schools showed that there are many factors that influence their English learning. These include school location, English language environment, family background and students' perceptions of foreign language learning. Students have different opinions on the reasons for learning English. The following are the responses from students who were interviewed at the second school:

Joy: Learning English is for communicating when traveling to other countries.

James: English is a useful language if I will be going to study abroad.

May: Foreigners rarely speak Chinese (when you communicate with them). Since there is a cost to hiring an interpreter, having the ability to speak English is important.

Tony: When I grow up, I want to be the boss of a multinational company. So I should be able to speak English.

Third school:

Apple: I learn English not because I like English, but because English is one of the subjects in this school.

Amy: I study English because I want my parents to be proud of my high marks in exams. I also want to be able to translate for them when they don't understand English.

Eddy: I study English because I want to make friends with many foreign students. Maybe in the future our school will

start to admit more foreign students.

Students expressed a love of English, but students at the second school preferred to learn English and they had a lot of motivation to continue. Although some students were exposed to English very early, they were very hesitant and lacked confidence in the interviews. Some students also have learning difficulties and lag in their learning speed. In addition, students who participated in extracurricular English training classes said that they preferred English classes in training schools, and believed that English in public schools was more stressful.

### *The results of the teacher survey interview*

The teachers were asked whether they had taken some basic compulsory courses before becoming English teachers, covering topics such as language skills, teaching methods, skills and assessment, student management, and home-school cooperation. The results of the questionnaire showed that only one-third of the teachers studied most of the courses mentioned above. However all the teachers had a National certificate they acquired through writing an exam that is required for them to become for them to become English teachers as mentioned above. The teacher questionnaire was prepared in English, and despite the teachers with many years of experience, there were still some grammatical errors in the sentences written. Most teachers were finding it difficult to hold a proper English conversation which is key when teaching a language. Teachers in the second and third schools made relatively few mistakes in their answers, and the teachers in the third school spoke better English. Also, the third school teachers taught English in a class 3 times a week, with an average of 25 students per class. Their workload is much lower than the other two schools, the work load is lighter, and they have more time to interact with students. In the national curriculum of China, English is a core subject just like Maths and Chinese language, however the other 2 subjects are taught every day of the week while English is only taught 3 times a week.

Regarding the difficulties they encountered in teaching English, they mainly included inappropriate teacher-student ratio, difficulty in teaching English grammar and writing, too many students in a class, no good method of managing the class, and lack of English practice environment. Here's what some teachers had to say:

S2T1: Students do not speak English every day. Inadequate environment affects their oral English development.

S2T3: Students do not have enough time to practice the language they are learning in the classroom.

S2T5: There are too many assignments to check because there are too many students.

S3T1: Disciplinary issues delay class time. Some students are naughty and hard to control.

S3T4: I always worry that my students cannot understand the English I teach, so, I use Chinese more in class to help

them understand.

S3T6: Parents cannot help children. We do not have more opportunities for oral practice. People who do well in spoken English may have had more exposure to English in extra classes or on vacation abroad.

For the question "According to your own opinion, is it better to create a special class for learners with learning disabilities, lower proficiency of the target language they are learning, or to integrate them into a class for learners without special needs and with a very high proficiency in the target language? Please explain your reasons for answering." The results of the questionnaire showed that two-thirds of teachers supported the idea of setting up special courses for slow learners and those with low proficiency levels in English, their reasons are:

S1T1: It reduces academic competition and helps students to be interested in English classes;

S2T3: students have different educational backgrounds and English proficiency so they must be grouped according to their learning level;

S3T4: It can better reflect the concept of personalized teaching and student-oriented;

S3T5: Layered teaching is more conducive to the learning of children at different levels. However, a third of the teachers interviewed did not agree to separate the teaching of students of different levels from the standpoint of student fairness.

### *Survey results of parents of students*

It can be seen from the survey on foreign language learning of primary school students that more parents choose to send their children to foreign language classes in off-campus training courses, because they believe that additional foreign language learning can improve their children's foreign language reading and writing skills, thereby improving their children's ability in the process of further education competitiveness. There are also some parents who are limited by their foreign language proficiency and cannot personally guide their children in foreign language learning. In order to prevent their children from being "left behind", they have to send their children to study in off-campus training institutions. For example, some migrant workers (rural to urban migrants) who work in cities do not have the time and ability to help their children study because they overwork and have a limited background of learning English. They think a more convenient and efficient way is to send them to foreign language classes or private tutoring. This is how most parents of primary school students in China support their children's foreign language learning. However, there are also some parents who disagree with their children taking out-of-school programs, arguing that it will add to their children's learning pressure. It can be generally seen that primary school students who participate in off-campus English training perform better on English tests, which can be partly attributed to their off-campus English learning.

## 6. Discussion and Suggestions on how to improve Second Language Teaching in Baoding Primary Schools

From this research it is clear that there are many factors contributing to the low English proficiency level amongst primary students in Baoding. Some of these factors include the number of English lessons in primary schools. Although English is considered to be a core subject, it cannot be compared to how other core lessons like Maths and Chinese lessons are taught. Students only learn English 3 times a week which is barely 120 minutes. Learning a language needs more practice and more lessons.

Another problem is the use of outdated learning materials in many schools. Since there are many training schools providing after-school English lessons, many students will come to school heavily equipped with knowledge from training schools. This will put students who do not attend these extra classes at a disadvantage because they only rely on the school textbooks which are not rich in content. By investigating the current situation of second language learning in primary schools in Baoding, we found some factors that affect second language learning, which may be the key to solving the problems related to second language learning. To help educators and researchers better build and improve foreign language teaching in Chinese primary schools in terms of second language acquisition, the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

### (1) Create an efficient and interesting classroom

The classroom is the basic place for students to learn a second language, and it is very important to have a good class. According to the "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard (2022 Edition)" issued by the Ministry of Education of China, in the course concept part, the "New Curriculum Standard" clearly points out that it is necessary to "play the leading role of core literacy" and "determine teaching goals around core literacy". Therefore, the goal of English courses is to develop students' core literacy of English subjects. The "New Curriculum Standard" clearly stipulates the elements of the core literacy of the English subject, namely language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. In primary school English classroom activities, teachers should focus on penetrating the core literacy of English subjects, scientifically set primary English teaching goals, teaching contents, and pedagogical organization forms, and link English knowledge with English thinking, English culture, and English language. This enables students to be more autonomous and active in English classrooms, cultivate students' good English learning attitude, learning quality, and practical ability, meet individualized English learning needs, and build an efficient primary school English classroom.

According to the age characteristics of primary school students who are active and curious about new things, a successful teacher should input language to them in a lively form, such as games, singing, dancing, rhythm, painting,

listening to nursery rhymes, listening to stories, and using body language which is a requirement from the curriculum standard. Teachers should encourage and praise children according to the actual situation of children, so as to enhance their self-confidence; treat children's language errors with a tolerant attitude to reduce the psychological pressure of students.

### (2) Develop teaching materials and learning resources

As noted in this survey, teachers in China expressed a need to upgrade the English books currently used in primary schools. The Chinese government has a policy of upgrading the curriculum from time to time, but the books currently used have been used for more than 10 years, and there are many learning materials outside the school, and the textbooks used in the school are gradually becoming irrelevant. In order to maintain students' language proficiency, the relevant departments that manage English language in schools should constantly check students' language proficiency and determine whether syllabuses and teaching materials need to be revised. On the other hand, technological advancements around the world are now very fast, and teachers must also rely on the Internet to expand their students' learning resources. Besides waiting for the government to provide new learning materials, teachers should also make full use of the Internet, integrate technology into the classroom, and partially solve the problem of insufficient teaching materials. Having a variety of teaching resources in the classroom is very effective for students to learn a second language. There should be projectors and other equipment in the classroom, and teachers can use PPT and the Internet to carry out teaching on the basis of textbooks. Some students learn by observation, some students learn by listening, and some students learn by doing. When a variety of teaching materials are available, the learning effect of students can be enhanced.

### (3) Strengthen the development of foreign language teachers

The uneven quality of teachers also affects the development of students' language learning. Some teachers' English proficiency needs to be improved.. It is necessary to strengthen the training of in-service teachers and improve the quality of foreign language teachers. Schools can seek some opportunities and channels to support primary school English teachers to further their studies. Schools can organise primary school English teachers to take advantage of vacations to go abroad for training, or participate in academic training camps for domestic teaching methods; conduct joint training with primary schools in the same city, and invite experts who specialise in foreign language teaching theories and methods to give relevant courses. Through a variety of methods, teachers can be driven out of their teaching comfort zone and seek innovation and breakthroughs.

In addition, it is found from the survey that foreign teachers are extremely low in the teaching staff of primary schools in Baoding city compared to other big cities. The grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, culture, national

conditions, and society of the second language are completely different from their native language. The information is passed on to the students, thereby improving the motivation, purpose, self-confidence, will and cooperative spirit of students' foreign language learning. Therefore, the number of foreign teachers needs to be increased.

## 7. Conclusions

Although English language learning has been made accessible for all in China, a lot has to be done to improve English language education especially in small towns like Baoding. The situations in big cities are different from small cities and this requires another research on its own. This particular research was conducted on a small scale, and the results may help uncover what is lacking in the schools surveyed. This survey is only an insight into the current state of foreign language learning in specific schools in small towns. If a subject is not considered very important by school management and other authorities, the students will also have the same attitude towards the subject. For instance: The number of classes for English lessons per week are lesser than other core subjects. The number of class hours in a foreign language course can greatly affect a student's performance in learning a foreign language in the classroom and students will not have a positive attitude towards it. Most importantly, having well-trained teachers and sufficient study materials is the best bridge for students to learn foreign languages effectively. It is worth mentioning that parents play an important role in students' foreign language learning. In conclusion, in order to achieve a positive outcome, a lot of work has to be done.

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