

## Evaluating an English Elite Program in Taiwan Using the CIPP Model

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To promote English language learning, universities in Taiwan have been setting up traditional and online English language self-study centers. English honors or elite programs are also being established to offer advanced training of the English language to students. A private university in northern Taiwan established the English Elite Program in 2008, providing courses in three different sections through traditional and distance learning modes. The distance learning courses aim to reduce students' difficulties with conflicting schedules between the courses in their own departments and the program courses. In this study, the researchers evaluate the Elite Program using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model. Data were collected from program documents, questionnaires, classroom observations, graduates' academic scores, and interviews of the instructors and graduates who received the program certificate. This study is helpful for program designers, teachers, students, and university administrators of this type of program and other similar foreign-language programs. This study also provides useful recommendations for universities planning to establish a similar program, particularly with the inclusion of distance learning courses.

**Keywords:** EFL, English elite program, program evaluation, CIPP model

### Introduction

In Taiwan, the government and parents place the utmost importance on learning the English language. In 2001, formal English language education was brought forward from the first year of junior high school to elementary school (Butler, 2004, 2009; Chang, 2006; Nunan, 2003), and recent globalization has affected university policies, which now place greater emphasis on improving students' English abilities. Thus, many universities and colleges in Taiwan have developed traditional and online self-learning centers to promote autonomous English learning (see, for example, Language Self-Learning Classroom of Fu Jen Catholic University (FJCU): <http://www.mmc.fju.edu.tw>; Online English Self-Study Center of FJCU: [http://ce.etweb.fju.edu.tw/self\\_learning.html](http://ce.etweb.fju.edu.tw/self_learning.html); and Tamkang MULTI: <http://www.multi.tku.edu.tw>). In addition, Elite or Honors English Programs established at the universities aim to help students who are not English majors (see, for example, National Taiwan Normal University's English Honors program and FJCU's English Elite Program at <http://www.engelite.fju.edu.tw>).

Nevertheless, many studies have evaluated a particular pedagogy or instruction such as literature-based instruction (Yau, 2007), cultural instruction and cross-cultural communication (Huang, 2011; Tseng, 2017), the use of a writing center (Yang & Sun, 2012), and online reading materials (Huang, 2013), but these are typically limited to courses in a department or center. To fill the gap in the literature that

addresses the design and efficacy of a combination of conventional, blended, and distance-based English language learning courses in a program, this paper explains the processes of setting up an Elite English Program with distance learning courses in Taiwan and evaluates its effectiveness. The results may be useful for similar elite programs of foreign languages.

## Introducing the English Elite Program at FJCU

During the spring semester of 2008, the Office of Academic Affairs, the College of Foreign Languages, the College of Management, and the College of Social Studies of a private university in the northern part of Taiwan, FJCU, came together to discuss the possibility of establishing an English Elite Program based on the instructional philosophy of an English honors class set up by the College of Social Studies two years ago. The idea was to expand the class to a program offered to all students at the university. After numerous meetings, the program guidelines and curriculum were completed and the first author of this paper was invited to act as the director to carry out the plans. The courses taught in the first two years of the program and the administrative fees for running the program were covered by the Teaching Excellence projects of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan. This section introduces the courses offered in the program and the students' backgrounds.

## The Courses

To receive the certificate of FJCU's English Elite Program, students must complete a total of 24 credits. These include 12 credits for the language courses offered by the Advanced and Intermediate English Distance Learning (AIEDL) Program, four credits for the Professional English Dialogue course, and eight credits for the professional courses. All of these courses are taught in English.

First, the 12 credits for the language courses are offered through the AIEDL Program, which was set up by the Department of English Language and Literature at FJCU in 2004. Courses offered via this program include the four skills courses, language teaching, literature, and cultural communication (for the website, please visit: <http://www.engelite.fju.edu.tw>). The language courses are designed for two levels—intermediate and advanced. Students must take at least two credits of advanced courses out of the 12 credits. Every AIEDL course has one to two teaching assistants (TA) who assist the students through face-to-face or online methods, thus providing support systems to all students in distance or hybrid courses. The distance learning courses reduce the students' difficulties with conflicting schedules between the courses in their own departments and the courses offered in the program.

The AIEDL courses use *EngSite* as the Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver the course contents and conduct interactive activities. *EngSite* is one of the LMSs used at FJCU (see Figure 1) designed specifically for language teaching and learning. Compared to other online instructional platforms, *EngSite* allows language teachers to grade compositions in multiple drafts, provide oral feedback in files (Lin, 2007), and upload multimedia teaching materials; the teachers can use the same materials in different courses and share them with other teachers on the platform. *EngSite* also provides many useful functional and non-functional tools for learners to learn the English language in either hybrid or distance modes. This system was evaluated by LMS experts and was found to be satisfactory overall (Shih & Su, 2008; Su & Shih, 2008).

Second, to improve students' English speaking skills, a one-credit professional English Dialogue course is offered over four consecutive semesters. Besides the practices in class with teachers, students are able to set up additional English conversation sessions with the TAs that are present in each class. The TA-student ratio is 1:13.

Third, students also enroll in either section A, International Applied English; section B, International Business; or section C, Multimedia English Teaching and Literature. Each section offers up to seven professional courses each semester. For sample courses of the program, see Appendix. The courses offered vary slightly from year to year.



Figure 1. The entry page of EngSite system.

Besides the three types of courses, the program also provides an advising system. The instructor of the Professional English Dialogue course serves as the students' academic advisor. The advisors meet with their advisees at least twice a semester to give them suggestions about their courses, check on their course election plans, and offer opportunities for them to practice speaking English. These advisors are either teaching in the program or serving on the program's executive committee.

The program strongly encourages the students to complete the 24 credits in three years. Completing the courses in two years would require the students to take 12 credits of courses per year, leading to an average of 6 credits (approximately 3 courses) every semester, which for non-English majors would be somewhat strenuous, especially when they take the professional courses (section A, B, or C) (see Table 1 for the course election pattern for three years). When students complete the 24 credits, they are required to pass the minimum requirement of one of the following English language proficiency tests to obtain the program certificate: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (CBT: 230; iBT: 80), General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) (intermediate-advanced), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) (670), Cambridge International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 6.0, or the equivalence of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 advanced level.

## General Background Information on Students

Since the establishment of the English Elite Program at FJCU, around 90–100 students were accepted into the program in the first few years. For instance, in 2008, the first year of the English Elite Program, 330 students applied for the program and 136 students passed the screening procedure to be accepted into the program (acceptance rate: 41.21%). Of the 136 students, 66 were sophomores, 49 were junior students, 19 were seniors, and two were graduate students (data from July 2008). The distribution of the students from the different colleges was also calculated (see Figure 2). The majority of students came from the College of Management, the College of Foreign Languages, and the College of Liberal Arts. The distribution was similar in the following years. These students could take either two or three years to complete the 24 required credits in the program.

TABLE 1  
The Course Pattern for Three Years

Courses	Year		
	First	Second	Third
AIEDL 12 credits*	Fall Spring	Listening; Speaking; Reading; Writing	
Professional Courses 8 credits	Fall Spring		
Professional Dialogue 4 credits	Fall Spring	1 credit 1 credit	1 credit 1 credit

Note. At least 2 credits of the 12 credits language courses should be the “advanced” level course.

In the years following 2009, the number of students applying for the English Elite Program decreased slightly because they applied for several programs at the same time. After being asked to choose one program from these multiple programs to meet the university regulation, they finally gave up on the English Elite Program. For future years, the executive committee of the program has suggested recruiting approximately 75 to 80 students every year.

### Purposes and Research Questions

This study evaluates the newly established English Elite Program at FJCU using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model and examines the effectiveness of distance-based English language learning. CIPP model is a program evaluation model by D. L. Stufflebeam (2002) and received great remarks in the evaluation of education (Galvin, 1983; Lu, 1996). There are two reasons for this program evaluation. First, since the English Elite Program has been established for several years, the results of the program evaluation will allow the administrators and teachers to improve the curriculum and requirements and present them as an example for universities that are interested in setting up a similar program. Second, a brief survey of similar university-based English elite programs in Taiwan and internationally via the Web found that few programs offer courses via the distance mode. Therefore, it is worth examining the perception of the English elite students regarding distance learning-based English training courses. The research questions are as follows:

- (1) What are the outcomes of the English Elite Program evaluation using the CIPP Model?
- (2) What are the students’ perceptions of taking English language courses via distance and blended modes?

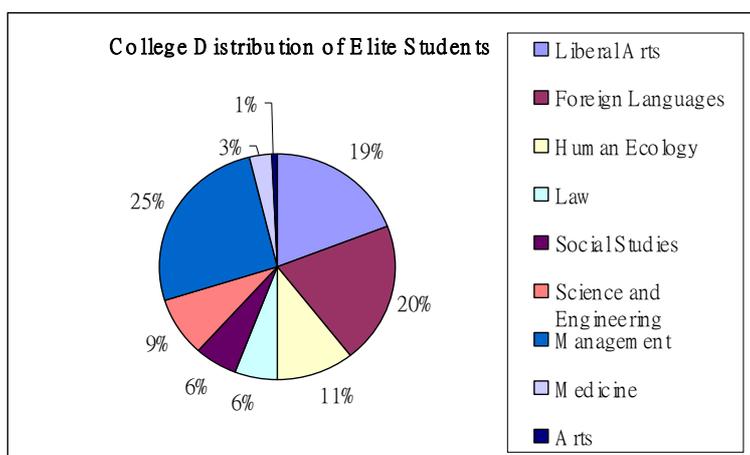


Figure 2. The distribution of students in the English Elite students based on colleges.

## Literature Review

### Program Evaluation

Language program evaluations have many functions. They could serve as guides to new teachers in their teaching practices or provide judgment to teachers, students, and program managers on their performance and values. "Evaluation is about the relationship between different program components, the procedures, and epistemologies developed by the people involved in programs, and the processes and outcomes which are used to show the value of a program" (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005, p. 5). Program evaluation is similar to research. Some may doubt it as a form of research because "most evaluations making judgments about a single program...lack external validity" (Nunan, 2001, p. 193). Others who take a broader view about program evaluation qualify it as a form of research since it makes enquiries and investigations, and interprets data (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Nunan, 2001). Posavac and Carey (1992) identified the difference between program evaluation method and research methods. The former encompasses the interpersonal skills involved in providing the services. Nunan (2001) pointed out that most people confuse the terms "assessment" and "evaluation," and some use them interchangeably. In fact, evaluation includes multiple processes that could, but do not necessarily, involve assessment data. Whichever data or procedures are involved in program evaluation, a successful program evaluation should provide new information that adds to the current knowledge about the program, even if these data are not used or are misused by the policymakers (Berk & Rossi, 1999).

Scholars in the field of training have explained the different models of program evaluation. For example, Eseryel (2002) outlined the following models in her paper: (1) Kirkpatrick's model, (2) CIPP Model, (3) Input, Process, Output, Outcome (IPO) Model, and (4) the Training Validation System (TVS) Approach. She concluded that the CIPP, IPO, and TVS models are more useful for considering the overall context and situation of the program. Another author, Marsden (1991), conducted a meta-analysis on evaluation articles and offered a detailed description of Brinkerhoff's six stages of program development and operation.

Of the numerous evaluation models, the most frequently used is Kirkpatrick's four-level model (Galvin, 1983; Kirkpatrick, 2004; Marsden, 1991), which looks at the program or training through *students' reactions*, *students' learning*, *students' behaviors*, and the *results* of the business or program. Another model that has been frequently used is Stufflebeam's CIPP model (Nunan, 2001). Using this model, the environment and needs of the program are defined via *context evaluation*; the information on the resources for meeting the program goals are identified by *input evaluation*; the data that provide the feedback to the program administrators for on-going improvements are collected and analyzed using *process evaluation*; and the unintended and intended accomplishments of the program are measured using *product evaluation* (Batdı, 2017; Galvin, 1983; Nunan, 2001; Stufflebeam, 2002).

In general, program evaluation can be categorized into different generations. The first generation measures test outcomes; the second generation pays attention to the process and the outcomes; the third generation provides insights for decision-making using a descriptive approach; and the fourth generation, marked by Guba and Lincoln in 1989, explores the individual's experiences of the program using the interpretive research method. Other than categorizing by generations, language programs can also be evaluated according to students' learning outcomes, the language teachers' instructional competency, the contribution of the native speaking teachers, students' views of their learning experiences at different stages of the courses, observing classroom processes, and analyzing documents (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005).

Scholars have pointed out that the data collected for evaluation should not simply be quantitative or qualitative-based and usually involve greater complexity by looking at various components of the program (Kiely and Rea-Dickins, 2005; Posavac & Carey, 1992). Since researchers have urged that the focus of evaluations should move away from measuring outcome and behaviors, and the CIPP model has received good remarks in education evaluation (Lu, 1996) and by training specialists (Galvin, 1983), we

collected data quantitatively and qualitatively to evaluate the program using the CIPP model. Several teaching and training programs have also adopted this evaluation model, which the researchers found useful (Brouwer, Muller, & Rietdijk, 2007; Matthews & Hudson, 2001; Nicholson, 1989), and other researchers have adapted the CIPP model and developed a variation model (Wischnowski, Salmon, & Eaton, 2004).

Despite the establishment of English elite and/or honors programs in many universities, and while some evaluation reports can be found on teacher training programs in Taiwan and internationally (Davis & Roblyer, 2010; Wang, 1996; Yang, 2003; Yao, 2003), English department courses (Lin, 2003), and English language policies (Chang, Yeh, Joe, You, Chern, & Liaw, 2008), few specific program evaluation reports relate to program evaluations. The findings of the current study will therefore provide valuable and practical recommendations to similar programs of English or other foreign languages.

## Blended Learning and Distance Learning

With the advent of telecommunications technology, many courses are being offered through the hybrid mode, also known as blended learning, which means that the instruction is supported by a mix of online technologies and face-to-face teaching. Many teachers have found that Web 2.0 technology is effective for learning and have given positive reports on the uses of weblogs and Facebook to support learning (Juang, 2008; Naghdipour, 2017), Wikis for deep learning (Chua & Chua, 2008), Information and Communication Technology to prompt intentional learning (Oshima, Oshima, Yuasa, Konishi, Itoh, & Okada, 2008), and the overall effectiveness of blended learning in language-related teaching (Mahmud, 2018). These examples provide adequate rationale for offering English language courses via the hybrid mode. Several AIEDL courses offered to FJCU's English Elite students follow the hybrid design, including *Critical Reading and Conversation*, *Listening Comprehension*, *Business Communication*, and *Classroom and Business Presentations*.

Courses offered through distance learning allow students and teachers to learn and teach through synchronous and asynchronous modes. The synchronous mode includes real-time components such as real-time chats, audio-conferencing, and videoconferencing, while the asynchronous mode is through email, discussion boards, and video or audio lecture files posted online. Distance courses allow critical and reflective thinking. Jones and Thadphoothon (2002) mentioned, "Computer-mediated collaborative learning has the potential to enhance critical thinking in language learning" (p. 1491). Teachers can make excellent use of the discussion boards and Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs and Wikis, to encourage students to practice their writing skills and interact with the class through online setting to enhance their critical thinking.

When language teachers teach through the distance environment, they are advised to provide the eight conditions that support optimal language learning environments (Chao, Egbert, & Smith, 1999). These conditions include providing opportunities for learner interaction with an authentic audience, negotiating meanings, working on authentic tasks, guiding through the learning processes, and supporting autonomy. For example, instructors can invite professionals/experts in the field to interact with the learners for Q&A sessions via the Internet or videoconferences. Authentic materials can also be found online easily (e.g., online news reports or restaurant menus). When teaching is conducted via the LMS, these learning conditions can be supported adequately with the teacher's guidance.

In Taiwan, many studies have been conducted on system designs, blended learning, and distance learning, besides the LMS evaluation of the *EngSite* system mentioned earlier in this paper (Shih & Su, 2008; Su & Shih, 2008). Liu (2005) discussed the procedure for applying the Instructional System Design (ISD) principles in blended English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Wu (2004) remarked, "A large number of studies have shown that computer and Internet are effective media of communication in language teaching and learning" (p. 660). Tai (2006) created several e-learning language courses using E-campus, the all-campus e-learning platform of Chung-Hua University, to enhance students' English learning. Students' reflections showed that, as long as the technical problems were solved early, they

could accept the new way of learning. Additionally, a number of features of online English have been discovered: (1) instant language repair, (2) uses of emoticons and animated graphics, (3) questions about English and teacher's immediate feedback, and (4) closer teacher-student relationships.

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants of this study comprised the students attending FJCU's English Elite Program. Data collected for this study were from year 1 to year 7 since its launch (2009–2015). Fifty-five graduates who completed the program allowed us to gather feedback information from them for the summative evaluation of the program. Since students of the Elite honors class under the College of Social Sciences (as the precedence of the program) were transferred into the program, there were graduating students who applied for the English Elite program certificates since 2009. Seven students successfully graduated with an English Elite Program certificate in July 2009 (identified as 0901–0907), 12 students in 2010 (identified as 1001–1012), six students in 2011 (identified as 1101–1106), nine students in 2012 (identified as 1201–1209), four students in 2013 (identified as 1301–1304), seven students in 2014 (identified as 1401–1407), and 10 students in 2015 (identified as 1501–1510). In addition, the teachers, course TAs, some drop-out students, and the administrative assistants were also invited to participate.

### Instruments

Bushnell (1990) cautioned that the selection and construction of tools for measurement must be suitable for data collection. Some of these may include the use of tests, questionnaires, performance assessments, performance records, observation checklists, problem simulations, and structured interviews. This study adopted two types of questionnaire: *Questionnaire of Program Evaluation* and *Questionnaire of Program Drop-Out*.

Regular courses are evaluated by the university through a university-wide online course evaluation system. Nevertheless, it is difficult for the program administrative personnel to gather students' overall perceptions of the English Elite Program through the regular course evaluation results. Therefore, every student who received a program certificate was asked to fill out a summative program evaluation questionnaire: *Questionnaire of Program Evaluation*. This survey, which was designed according to items suggested by Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005), asked for the students' opinions about admissions, tutorial support and guidance, academic values, and the difficulties experienced with their studies. Additional items related to the curriculum design, course modes, program requirements, and administrative affairs.

In addition, the *Questionnaire of Program Drop-Out* was designed for the drop-out students to complete when they informed the program of their intention to drop the program.

### Procedure

Program evaluation helps the researchers to determine the success of the program. In this study, we completed the following procedures:

First, we reviewed the documents, including the program design processes, and observed some of the face-to-face meetings in the online and/or blended learning courses.

Second, we observed the two types of courses taught in the regular classrooms (the professional courses and Professional English Dialogue courses): Some of the professional courses from section A (International Applied English), section B (International Business), section C (Multimedia English Teaching and Literature), and the Professional English Dialogue course. Based on Kiely and

Rea-Dickins's (2005) suggestion, we also audio-recorded parts of the students' performances in class to assist our evaluation. Permissions were obtained from the instructors and students to make audio/video recordings in the class observations. Finally, we invited four teachers (T1-T4), four TAs (TA1-TA4), and four students (S1-S4) to participate in face-to-face interviews to establish their views toward the traditional courses (the three sections of the professional courses and the Professional English Dialogue courses) and the program as a whole.

Third, we read carefully the records of the email messages exchanged between the teachers and the administrative staff about problems that evolved during the teaching and collected opinions from the meetings of the executive committee.

Fourth, we designed the *Questionnaire of Program Evaluation* and the *Questionnaire of Program Drop-out* based on the items suggested by Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005) and invited two experts and a small number of students to review the questionnaires before administering them to the graduating students and drop-outs of the program.

Fifth, we invited four students who were graduating from the Elite Program and leaving the university at the end of the academic year to participate in the face-to-face interviews.

Last, we examined the average scores for the three types of courses taken in the program (the language training courses, the professional courses, and the dialogue courses) as well as the overall average of the academic scores in the English Elite Program and examined the correlations between these scores. Furthermore, we compared the graduates' course ratings to find out whether a relationship exists. Davin, Rempert, and Hammerand (2014) pointed out that when evaluating the effectiveness of a foreign language program, the scores are simply one source of evidence. We therefore triangulated these scores with the qualitative data.

## Data Collection and Analysis

The following are the nine sources of data used for the evaluation (with the indication of the source): (1) *Questionnaire of Program Evaluation* (PE), (2) *Questionnaire of Program Drop-Out* (DP), (3) observation of some AIEDL classroom processes (date of observation as in year-month-day and course type), (4) observation of some courses in the traditional setting (date of observation as in year-month-day and course type), (5) review of program documents (MM = meeting minutes, A = administrative assistant reports, AM = administrator's report, and B = budget sheet), (6) interview of the teachers and the TAs (T and TA with a number of indication), (7) student interviews, (8) exchanged messages via email and in the committee meetings (E), and (9) students' academic scores. The quantitative data, such as students' academic scores and the course ratings in the questionnaires, were calculated and analyzed using statistical software SPSS 20, Pearson-Product Moment correlation for the normal distributed data, the Spearman Rank Order correlation for non-normally distributed data, and linear regression. The qualitative data was managed using qualitative computer software NVivo 10 and analyzed using document analysis and content analysis methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Table 2 presents the data collected for the context, input, process, and product of the evaluation. The evaluation questions relate to each component (Henderson, 1998, p. 4).

## Results and Discussions

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses revealed the responses to the following areas and are reported based on the CIPP criteria: Rationale of the establishment of the English Elite Program, challenges from the administrative perspectives, the course designs, and the benefits gained by the students.

TABLE 2  
*The Use of the CIPP Model in Evaluating the English Elite Program*

Evaluation	Questions	Data types
Context	What are the goals of the program? Do the goals reflect the needs of the participants of the program?	Program documents; Meeting minutes and reports; Interview of the students
Input	What is required to achieve a set of goals in staffing, budgeting, scheduling, and other resources?	Document and budget review; Meeting minutes and reports; Interview of teachers
Process	How are resources allocated? How is material adapted? How is information disseminated?	Interview of TAs, teachers, and administrative assistants; Classroom observations of the AIEDL courses and traditional courses; Interview of the students
Product	What is outcome evidence? Should the program be continued, revised, terminated? Should funds be increased or decreased? Should the program be merged with another?	Interview of TAs, teachers, and administrative assistants; <i>Distance Learning Satisfaction Questionnaire</i> ; students' academic performance scores; <i>Questionnaire of program evaluation</i> ; The passing rate statistics; Interview of the graduating students

*Note.* The evaluation questions are proposed by Henderson, 1998, p. 4.

### Context and Input: The Rationale of the Establishment of this Program

Based on the document analysis of the meeting minutes and email messages of the program committee, administrative staff, and the teachers, it became clear that the university set up this program to improve the English abilities of non-English major students who are considered as having the ability to excel in their English language skills. The goals fulfill the needs of the students who applied for the program, as they were hoping to enhance their English language ability besides their own field of study. The program was based on the established English Honor's class in the College of Social Sciences, supported by the former Dean of the College of Social Sciences. The Dean of Academic Affairs and the Deans of three different colleges—the College of Foreign Languages, the College of Social Studies, and the College of Management—came together to discuss establishing a school-wide English Elite Program (MM1, MM2, MM3, and MM4). Using the budget from the Excellence Teaching Project funded by the MOE in Taiwan, the English Elite Program began in 2008. After four years of functioning under the Office of English Elite Program (2008-2012), currently it has been under the supervision of the Vice-Dean Office of College of Foreign Languages, which handles the affairs of English instruction for the whole university.

Besides the language training courses and four credit hours of Professional Dialogue courses, the program considered offering professional courses based on the learners' interests (offering the different sections of professional courses: A, B, and C), which included applied English courses, Management courses, and a Multimedia English and Literature course (MM4). As the language training courses included more than one choice of course per skill, the students were able to select multiple courses under each skill for diversification reasons and to ensure that the objectives of the program matched the learners' needs.

The students' academic records indicated that some students who performed less well in their major excelled in the English language courses they took from the English Elite Program, thus increasing their semester average grade (AM). The English Elite Program therefore helps non-English majors to continue their interests in English language learning.

## Context and Input: Challenges from the Administrative Perspective

The personnel in the office of the English Elite Program have faced several challenges. The first challenge was that, despite a high number (70-80) of students passing the screening process every year for the first three years, the drop-out rate was very high. After seven years since its launch, only 55 students successfully completed the courses in the English Elite Program and received the program certificate upon their graduation by the fifth year of the study in FJCU. The remaining students either filed for drop-out formally by informing the program office via email or in person, or they simply graduated with their Bachelor's degree without receiving the program certificate (which means that they simply "disappeared" from the program and graduated without notifying the program office that they did not intend to obtain the certificate). This means that students who passed the Elite English program entrance exam failed to complete all of the courses required to receive the certificate (AM).

Responses to the *Questionnaire of Program Drop-out* gave several reasons for leaving the program. Some students were mentally unprepared to complete the whole program (DP 7), some did not want to prolong their studies at FJCU and delay graduation (DP1), some intended to prepare and study for graduate school entrance exams (DP42, DP 58), and others could not handle the extra workload because their original workload was already heavy (DP 21, DP22, DP36); however, the majority of respondents were uncomfortable learning English through the distance (for instance, DP4, DP5; DP10; DP12) and suggested increasing the amount of face-to-face language training courses.

The second challenge was the undergraduate assistants' unfamiliarity with the administrative work. Since its launch, the program hired undergraduate students as administrative assistants. However, as these student assistants would graduate every year, new student assistants needed to be hired and trained every year. This led to considerable trouble for the director (for yearly training) and the assistants. For instance, assistant A1 wrote in her reflection, "Whenever we wanted to know things such as the expense resource, the accounts and passwords for offering courses, or the website design/update issues, we didn't know who to ask or where to find the information. All we could rely on was the temporary (*sic*) schedule left by the previous assistants" (A1). Furthermore, the Elite students expressed that the office hours of the program should be longer (PE0904; PE1201) because the undergraduate assistants could only work in the office during lunchtime when they did not have classes. Nevertheless, they were appreciative that information was announced on the program website and in the closed Facebook group.

The third challenge was that the financial budget of the program depended on the College of Foreign Languages. After the first two years of financial support by the Excellence Teaching Project funded by the MOE, the program had to function with funds for part-time assistants fees, telephone fees, and fees for promotion (printing of posters and registration forms) (B). However, it would also be helpful if the university could offer other budgets to cover other fees such as the advisor's fees.

Last, several students mentioned that more guaranteed spaces should be allocated to the Elite students for the professional courses offered by the individual departments (PE1004, PE1009). For example, the students complained that the number of pre-registration spaces on the professional courses, especially section A, were limited. The majority of the Elite students have been registered under section A out of the three sections; however, the number of courses in this track have been very limited, which is about the same number of courses compared to that of the other tracks.

## Process: Course Designs

### Special features of the courses

At least two clear main features can be seen in the courses offered by the English Elite Program. First, all of the courses follow the same All-English policy of the courses in the Department of English Language and Literature. Second, the courses are multidimensional, meaning that these classes use multiple ways of teaching, such as in-class and online discussions, written papers, and group-based and/or

individual presentations, to achieve learner outcomes (Interview, T1, T2, and T3; Interview, S1, S2; Observation 2011-05-19, language training course). Besides these learning methods, a section C course, *English Language Teaching and Learning through Multimedia*, included learner-centered concepts and offered multimedia workstation activities (with seven to ten workstations using various forms of media) for the students to experience learning the English language through different media.

### **English language training courses offered via distance mode**

The language training courses are offered via the AIEDL courses to the Elite students, as distance (with three face-to-face meetings in the whole semester) or blended courses. Our observations and participation in the end-of-the-semester meetings with the AIEDL teachers revealed that teachers reach out to students to help with their English language ability either synchronously or asynchronously. Teachers meet with their students via the synchronous technologies such as *JoinNet* desktop videoconference program several times per semester and continuously interact with the students via the discussion areas in *EngSite*.

The face-to-face meetings for these distance courses were usually to teach students how to use the computer software, to help with in-class activities, or to offer advice on students' presentations. The teacher usually began with an overview of the course and held discussions with the students (Observation 2011-05-19, language training course) or gave constructive comments to students after their presentations (Observation 2011-06-08 and 2011-06-15, section C course). Through their citation analysis of papers published in the Distance Education field between 1972 and 2008, Tuncay and Uzunboylu (2010) found that the important components for Distance Education are "Human, students, teaching, internet, and learning system" (p. 65), indicating the importance of human factors in distance teaching and learning. The AIEDL teachers tried hard to provide a social presence in cyberspace.

Besides serving the students through effective teaching and communication, the faculty of these distance courses should continuously support each other and receive support from the school administration to improve the course content design, teaching strategies, and provide technical support. This is because students' online learning satisfaction relies on instructors' teaching skills and experience, the study materials designed for the learners, and the course organization (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009).

### **Professional courses**

As for the professional courses in sections A, B, and C, students must be motivated to continue their study of these certain areas (i.e., Multimedia English, Literature, or Business Management). One student-interviewee said broadly that the program should warn students without a background in the management area to think twice before signing up for section B courses because only eight credits of the courses in a specific area, without the requirement of any fundamental courses, would eventually lead to student confusion, frustration, and ineffective learning (Interview, S3; PE1005; PE1207).

Therefore, students should have some background knowledge of these specific areas of study and the Program should require students to take the basic required courses of each area before proceeding to the advanced courses. However, as the supporting departments do not allow extra students to be added into their basic fundamental courses, it is difficult to incorporate such a design. This suggests that students registering for the courses in the professional areas are typically majors in those areas, that is, students taking section B, the Business Management courses, are from the College of Management.

Nevertheless, some students were satisfied and capable of handling the professional courses outside of their original field of study. Student 1502 hoped that more section A courses could be offered: "Because during the two and a half years of study in the Elite Program, I have taken almost all of the Section A courses" (PE1502). Student 1506 was a student from the College of Management and found section A courses to be very practical, "The Professional Courses enhanced my English language ability as they helped me to improve my listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills" (PE1506).

## Professional dialogue training

The oral training courses have been generally well-received because the course is taught in a lively manner and students have opportunities to speak English, improve their pronunciation, and interact with classmates from other departments in English (Observation 2011-05-30, Dialogue course; PE1204; PE1205; PE1504; PE1506; PE1510). Nevertheless, one credit per semester for such a course tended to be a bit too short as the amount of class time did not allow for the extra amount of work put into the course (by teachers) and the extra practice (by the TAs and students) to be done in class, which led to students' complaints because they had to spend outside class hours to complete those practices and work. For instance, one student wrote, "If we had more time, it would be even better (it should be a two-credit-hours course)" (PE1001). Another student wrote,

Since the course is only one credit, the one-hour class time every week is rather short. And the oral practice time with the TAs need to be outside class hours, which is really inconvenient for us to sign up for because our team members are all from different departments (PE1008).

Many students agreed that the Professional Dialogue course should be revised to a two-credit course per semester for four semesters. However, because this course is offered by the Program itself and not by other departments (such as the language training courses and the professional courses), the credit of this particular course is charged by the university; thus, the students would need to pay double the current payment (to increase from 4 to 8 credits). When the students suggested increasing the length of the course, they may not have been aware of the increased cost, and many may not be willing or able to pay.

## Product: Benefits Gained by the Students

### Students graduating with certificates

Forty-six students chose section A for their professional courses, five students completed the courses of section B, one student completed the courses of section C, and three students were cross-section students. Out of the 55 students who successfully received the program certificate, 51 students took the TOIEC exam, two students took the IELTS exam, one took the TOEFL exam, and one student used a Research Paper to show the English writing and research ability and for the fulfillment of the program requirement. The average score for the TOIEC exam gained by the 51 students was 797.50 ( $SD = 72.27$ ).

Out of the three types of courses, the graduates' average score was 79.95<sup>1</sup> ( $SD = 4.59$ ) for the AIEDL courses, 81.98 ( $SD = 5.55$ ) for the professional courses, 84.74 ( $SD = 3.40$ ) for the dialogue courses, and 82.11 ( $SD = 3.78$ ) for the overall Elite Program courses. The result of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showed that the AIEDL average correlates with the professional course average to a medium degree ( $r = .62, p < .001$ ); however, the correlation of the average score of the professional courses and the dialogue courses is not significant ( $r = .24, p = .08$ ), neither is the correlation of the average score of AIEDL courses and the dialogue courses ( $r = .17, p = .22$ ). This may indicate that a student's progress with the four skills in the English language training courses sets the foundation for the learner's performance in the professional courses; this makes sense because in the professional courses, the student needs to apply all four skills in the acquisition of professional knowledge (since the courses are all taught in English). The overall English Elite Program average score is highly correlated with the average scores of the AIEDL courses ( $r = .81, p < .001$ ) and the professional courses ( $r = .81, p < .001$ ), and moderately correlated with the average score of the dialogue courses ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ) (see Table 3). The scores from all three types of courses contribute to the total Elite score.

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<sup>1</sup> Scores given in Taiwan corresponding to the four points GPA system are: 80–100 = 4.0; 70–79 = 3.0; 60–69 = 2.0. Therefore, scores above 80 are considered very good.

TABLE 3  
*Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of the Course Mean Scores*

	AIEDL mean	Professional mean	Dialogue mean	Elite mean
AIEDL mean	-			
Professional mean	.62***	-		
Dialogue mean	.17	.24	-	
Elite mean	.81***	.81***	.47***	-

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Furthermore, the correlation coefficient of the graduates' average score for the overall English Elite Program courses ( $M = 82.11$ ;  $SD = 3.78$ ) and their total academic average of the four years of university education ( $M = 80.13$ ;  $SD = 4.17$ ) are  $r = .57$  ( $p < .001$ ), indicating a moderate correlation between the two scores. Thus, the students' English ability helped to improve the final overall average scores of their academic studies for their majors to a certain extent.

The students also reported improved English language skills. For instance, student 0907 mentioned, "(My) writing and reading skills have improved enormously" (PE0907), and student 103 wrote in the survey, "I have improved my English oral and writing skills. And I learned different ways to study English through classmates" (PE1001).

These graduating students were appreciative of the credit waiver system, which allowed them to apply for a credit waiver if they had taken similar courses (e.g., Advanced English Reading) in another situation, so that some of them could complete the program and apply for a certificate before they graduated. This increased some of the students' motivation to complete the English Elite credits.

Some students also found the advisor's system to be helpful. However, after the first year, which had a budget to pay individual teachers to serve as advisors, the budget was withdrawn, leaving professional dialogue teachers to serve as the advisors voluntarily. Therefore, while students in their second and third years of study had an advisor for academic counseling, the first-year students received little support despite their particular need for advice at the start of the Elite courses.

The majority of graduates with a program certificate were satisfied with the courses offered by the program. Some even wrote in the questionnaire that they hoped the program would be expanded to include more sections and courses (PE1005, PE1206). When asked by the *Questionnaire of Program Evaluation* to rate the three types of courses offered upon their application for the certificate, the average rating for the language courses (offered via distance or blended mode) was 82.74 (out of 100) ( $SD = 8.30$ ), the average rating for the professional courses (of section A, B, or C) was 85.95 ( $SD = 6.35$ ), and the average rating for the dialogue courses was 83.70 ( $SD = 8.29$ ), indicating positive feedback. Spearman's rank order correlation conducted on the ratings of these three types of courses (Spearman's rho test was used for this set of data because they were not normally distributed) revealed a moderate correlation between all three types of courses: the rating of the AIEDL courses vs. that of the professional courses was  $r = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ; the rating of the AIEDL courses vs. that of the dialogue courses was  $r = .57$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and the rating of the professional courses vs. that of the dialogue courses was  $r = .34$ ,  $p = .007$  (see Table 4). The results indicate that the students held similar attitudes toward these three types of courses. Furthermore, when an analysis was conducted on the course mean scores with the students' ratings of the type of courses using Spearman's rank order correlation, among the three different types of courses, only the professional course mean vs. rating was correlated,  $r = .33$ ,  $p = .015$  (see Table 5). A simple regression analysis was also applied to the course mean scores and ratings of the three types of courses to test whether the students' ratings of the course are strong predictors of their average score for the course set. According to the data, only the scores for the professional courses show a significant level ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that the students' rating of the professional courses is a predictor of the course average score for the professional courses (see Table 6). The unstandardized ( $B$ ) coefficient was .28, meaning that for every unit of students' rating of the professional courses, the students' professional course average score went up by .28 points. It is highly likely that, as the English language and oral courses are basic courses of language training, the students' ratings of the course do not correlate with their performances. However, since the professional courses are offered by the individual departments

rather than by the English Elite Program, some students may find it difficult to adjust to this alternative field of study; therefore, if they comprehend the knowledge of the field outside of their major, they would be satisfied and they would be able to gain higher scores, and vice versa. To encourage the students to progress in this second professional field of study, the English Elite Program can also encourage students to take a minor from those particular departments.

Even though the students' ratings on the AIEDL courses were quite high ( $M = 82.74$ ;  $SD = 8.30$ ), there were some doubtful responses in the qualitative data regarding the language training courses offered via distance learning. For instance, one student wrote, "The language courses (offered via AIEDL) were OK, because they were almost all offered via distance learning, and some course contents seemed boring" (PE1103). Another student felt the course was not well designed, "Because some foreign teachers were located abroad, so they could not teach us directly" (PE1104), and a third wrote, "Overall the courses are good; however, there was a certain level of difficulty for using JoinNet" (PE1205). This indicates that not all students are used to learning EFL via distance learning. As Mayadas et al. (2009) pointed out, "Online students need to be more self-disciplined" (p. 52) and Dixson (2010) noted that one crucial component of effective online teaching is student engagement. If a learner is not self-responsible to go online or feel engaged in the online class, the learning outcome is doubtlessly ineffective. Godwin-Jones (2015) mentioned that the effectiveness of technology use is based on the learner's confidence and level of comfort using the particular tools. While Taiwanese learners are highly accepting of learning using e-learning tools, they seem to have difficulty when it comes to learning the four skills of a foreign language online. Student 1502 stated, "I am not used to the AIEDL type of language training courses. I would forget to submit assignments because of the change in the Internet-based course schedule or my own laziness" (PE1502). Face-to-face instruction is thus still more favorable to some students.

TABLE 4  
*Spearman's Rank Order Correlation of the Student Ratings of the Courses*

	AIEDL rating	Professional rating	Dialogue rating
AIEDL rating	-		
Professional rating	.53***	-	
Dialogue rating	.57***	.36**	-

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

TABLE 5  
*Spearman's Rank Order Correlation of the Course Mean Scores versus Student Ratings of the Courses*

	AIEDL mean	Professional mean	Dialogue mean
AIEDL rating	.19	-	-
Professional rating	-	.33*	-
Dialogue rating	-	-	-.12

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

TABLE 6  
*Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Professional Course Mean Scores*

	B	SE (B)	$\beta$	$t$	Sig. ( $p$ )
Prof. course rating	.28	.11	.32	2.49	.016

Note.  $R = .32$ ;  $R^2 = .10$ ;  $F(1, 53) = 6.18$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### Students without graduating certificates

The students who did not graduate with the program certificate also found the courses beneficial. Responses to the drop-out questionnaire indicated that some of them still appreciated the continuous practice of English language via the courses they had taken before they applied to drop out of the program (DP16, DP41).

## The Model of the English Elite Program, Future Improvement of the Program, and Conclusions

Figure 3 shows a model of the English Elite Program structure. The people (learners, teachers, TAs, administrative personnel) and the curriculum/course designs constitute the overall English Elite Program. The courses are offered through the face-to-face and distance learning modes.

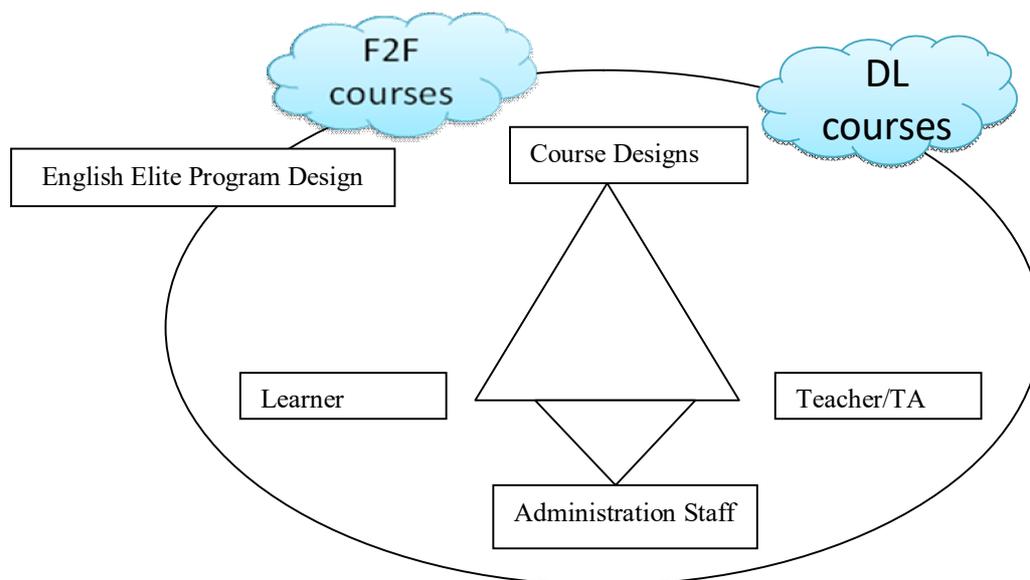


Figure 3. The formation of the English Elite Program.

This evaluation of the overall English Elite Program at FJCU shows that the program is functioning with only a few students applying for the program certificate each year. Several changes have been carried out over the past six years to improve the program.

First, to avoid relying on the undergraduate assistants, who could only work minimal hours and needed to be replaced every year, the Vice-Dean, who has run the English Elite Program since 2013, passed the responsibility of managing the program affairs to her full-time secretary. The secretary hires part-time student assistants to help out with trivial things such as compiling students' background information.

Second, technological updates were applied to the LMS, *EngSite*. The online video files were converted from .wmv files to mpg files for viewing on different browsers such as IE, Chrome, and FireFox. A mobile version of the LMS has also been developed to enable students to access the learning materials through their mobile devices.

Based on the questionnaire and interview findings, we have made several recommendations for additional revisions. First, to respond to students' expectations, the university has been planning to add more sections to the program, such as seeking connections with colleges other than the College of Management and the College of Foreign Languages. However, we suggest that such action should only be taken after improvements are made to the basic design of the English language training courses and the Professional Dialogue courses (such as adding some face-to-face language training courses). In addition, a survey could be conducted to find out the potential students' interests regarding the areas of professional courses to be offered. For instance, the program could find out whether or not learners with non-medical backgrounds would be interested in learning medical English.

Second, non-distance-based courses for language training should also be offered since some students expressed doubts about learning a language via distance learning. However, the Department of English Language and Literature already offers face-to-face English training courses to non-English major

students through a minor degree. Thus, there is a need to investigate the extent to which the inclusion of face-to-face courses in the English Elite program might affect the minor degree offered by the English Department.

Finally, changing the Professional Dialogue courses from one credit per semester to two credits per semester would provide learners more time to practice their oral skills, and interact with classmates from other departments and the TA in class.

In conclusion, the establishment of the English Elite Program at the university level in an EFL environment such as in Taiwan will continue to benefit EFL learners by providing more all-English training in a non-native environment. As most learners are digitally competent nowadays, distance learning gives learners the flexibility in time and space to manage their studies. Universities can also adopt this example (with curriculum designs) in their curriculum design to set up similar programs for students to learn and excel in other foreign languages.

### Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the Research and Development Grant of Fu Jen Catholic University (Contract Number 409931054047). An earlier part of this study was presented at the 2012 International Symposium on Education and Psychology in Hong Kong. We would also like to thank the assistance offered by the *Advanced and Intermediate English Distance Learning* program coordinator, Dr. KCW Liu, the Vice-dean office of the College of Foreign Languages of Fu Jen Catholic University, and the research assistant of the study, Ms. A. Chang. We are also grateful to the editors and anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions for this article.

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## Appendix

### Sample Course List of the English Elite Program

#### I. Sample list of AIEDL- Language Training Courses

Skill & Level	Course Title
Speaking - Intermediate	Business Communication: Oral Communication Skills
Writing - Intermediate	Business Letter Writing
Speaking & Listening - High	Classroom and Business Presentations
Listening & Speaking - High	Cross-Cultural Business Communication
4 skills - Intermediate	Daily English in Films
Listening & Speaking - Intermediate	Daily English Listening and Speaking
Writing - Beginning	Fundamental Writing
Listening, Reading, Writing - High	Listening, Reading and Writing Practice for Proficiency Test
Reading - Intermediate	Reading American Culture
Reading - Intermediate	Reading II: News English Reading
Writing - Intermediate	Writing (I): Expository Writing
4 skills - Intermediate	Speaking and Writing Practice for Proficiency Test (GEPT)
Writing - High	Writing (II): Research Writing

#### II. Sample Professional Courses for All Three Sections (in English)

Section A: International Applied English	Offering Unit
Speaking and Writing Practice for Proficiency Test (GEPT)	Holistic Center
English Business and International Trade Writing	Holistic Center
English Listening	Holistic Center
Advanced English Oral Training	Holistic Center
Business Communication: Oral Communication Skills	Holistic Center
Cross-Cultural Business Communication	Holistic Center
Reading II: News English Reading	Holistic Center
Section B: International Business	Offering Unit
Management	Business Management
Enterprise Resource Planning	Information Management
Finance	Finance and Trade
Productions and Operations Management	Business Management
Management of Information System	Information Management
Introduction to Information Management	Information Management
Supply Chain Management	Information Management
Contemporary Issues in Business, Economics and Finance	Business Management
Section C: Multimedia English Teaching and Literature	Offering Unit
American Literature I	English
Introduction to Literature	English
British Literature I	English
Multimedia English Teaching and Learning	English
World Literatures in English	English
Teaching Reading	English
Introduction to Linguistics	English
Taiwan Studies	English
British Literature II	English
Selected Readings of American Novel	English
Teaching Pronunciation	English