Bilingual Teachers' Speaking Anxiety: A Hermeneutic Phenomenology Study

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Article Info	Abstract
	Globalization and internationalization have compelled nations worldwide to respond actively, with bilingual education emerging as a widely acknowledged measure. In Taiwan, where the focus is particularly on enhancing English proficiency, the implementation of bilingual education policies has stirred controversy. The core of the issue lies in the inconsistency between positive outcomes in research articles and the expectations of the public. Furthermore, little attention has been paid towards the conditions faced by in-service teachers. This study aimed at bridging these gaps by exploring the lived experiences of bilingual in-service teachers influenced by speaking anxiety. Utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenology approach, in-depth narratives were collected from ten in-service teachers in Taiwanese secondary schools. Rigorous data analysis revealed three interconnected themes—endless challenges, lonely battles, and deleterious doubts—that have internally shaped the life world of secondary bilingual teachers. Their life world unfolded as a cyclic journey through three stages of speaking anxiety: high, intermediate, and mild anxiety. In conclusion, this study highlighted the importance of the government honestly addressing the challenges faced by in-service teachers rather than adopting a complacent stance.

Introduction

In the contemporary era of internationalization and globalization, the imperative to augment a nation's competitiveness necessitates the cultivation of English communication proficiency and heightened global awareness (Azzam, 2019; Wang et al., 2023). In response to such global phenomenon, bilingual education, especially focusing on English teaching and learning, has received much attention, prompting relevant studies worldwide (Salaberri-Ramiro & Sánchez-Pérez, 2021). Regarding instituting bilingual programs, the rapid practices of two pedagogical approaches, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) have been furthered (Kuo, 2022). Owing to the Bologna Declaration, most countries in Europe have implemented bilingual education for twenty years (Huang, 2023; Airey et al., 2017). Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden are believed to be pioneers to carry out these teaching approaches in educational environment (Airey et al., 2017). In recent years, several publications of this global phenomenon draw scholars and educators' attention towards this educational landscape (Sungatullina et al., 2021). In the Asian context, Japan has actively advocated for the adoption of both EMI and CLIL methodologies through strategic initiatives

like the Global 30 Project in 2001 and the Top Global University Project in 2014. This proactive stance has resulted in a noteworthy surge in the enrollment of international students, underscoring the academic impact of these projects (Rose & McKinley, 2018). In the same vein, domestic and international students studying in Korea have gained benefits from the Education Reform in 1995 (Kim, 2021). To address the trend of internationalization, Taiwanese government introduced *Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation* at the end of 2018, and the vision is that Taiwan will become a bilingual country by 2030 (National Development Council (NDC), 2018). As outlined by NDC (2018), four overarching policy objectives have been put forth, encompassing (a) boosting citizens' English skills to meet contemporary demands, (b) bridging resource gaps between urban and rural areas using digital technology, (c) aligning the growth of bilingual education policies with the preservation of mother tongue culture, and (d) creating competitive edges for the younger generation. However, the implementation of bilingual education policy has sparked heated controversies and debates (Liang, 2022).

Bilingual Education in Taiwan: Navigating the Controversies

Without historical and cultural foundations comparable to those countries in Europe (Garcia & Woodley, 2014), bilingual education in Taiwan has faced severe challenges and arguments (Liang, 2022; Lin, 2022). The major contention lies in the disparity between findings presented in academic research papers and the expectations voiced by the general public. In the perspective of contributions to this confrontational discourse, two types of studies were discussed, including studies on perceptions and instructional effects. With respect to studies on perceptions, Kuo (2023) surveyed 422 in-service elementary and junior high school teachers to investigate their views on native language utilization, non-verbal behaviors, and meaning-making signs. Utilizing a combination of the online questionnaire and classroom observations, the study revealed that teachers at both levels expressed positive views on the advantages of CLIL. The study argued the imperative to raise awareness and promote the adoption of this effective teaching approach. Besides, Tien (2023) investigated the perspectives of college students regarding the incorporation of EMI. The study involved 86 participants from a private institution, employing a mixed-method design that combined questionnaires with online one-on-one interviews. The findings indicated that students perceived EMI instruction as beneficial for their future academic and professional pursuits, leading to improvements in overall English proficiency in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. However, challenges were noted in understanding specialized terms, addressing speaking anxiety, and developing comprehensive listening skills. In the meantime, tens of thousands of people, along with various educational institutions, scholars, in-service teachers, parents, and students, have collectively launched a petition, appealing for the cessation of the implementation of the 2030 bilingual education policy (United Daily News, 2023).

When it comes to investigations on instructional effects of EMI and CLIL, numerous studies have been done in Taiwan up to the present moment (Gu et al., 2021). Building on this academic landscape, Pan et al. (2023) examined the impact of EMI on elementary students' engineering and English proficiency. By applying a true experimental design with pretest and posttest measures, thirty winter camp students were randomly assigned to EMI and semi-EMI groups. The EMI group received engineering instruction in English, while the semi-EMI

group utilized English-based materials with Chinese lectures. A focus interview protocol was employed to explore participants' EMI learning experiences. Quantitative results indicated significant enhancements in engineering and English proficiency under the EMI model. Qualitatively, maintaining a positive attitude was identified as a contributing factor to success in EMI learning. Similarly, In Lee's (2023) quasi-experimental study, the primary aim was to delve into the efficacy of computer-mediated terminology pretraining (CMTP) in enhancing the success of university students undertaking courses delivered in EMI. The research involved a total of 86 participants, who were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group. The control group, comprised of 39 students, went through a problem-based learning (PBL) curriculum design. In contrast, the experimental group, consisting of 47 students, experienced a combination of PBL and CMTP. To gauge the impact of these interventions, a pretest and posttest design was employed. The findings of the study revealed a noteworthy enhancement in learners' response efficacy due to CMTP. Both groups exhibited an augmentation in self-directed learning (SDL) when exposed to the PBL pedagogy. However, the multigroup comparison presented that EMI efficacy positively predicted SDL, resulting in a substantial improvement in EMI performance within the experimental group. This positive relationship was not observed in the control group, suggesting that the integration of CMTP played a pivotal role in fostering a connection between efficacy, SDL, and subsequent EMI success. Its conclusion, therefore, stressed the potential benefits of incorporating computer-mediated terminology pretraining in educational settings, particularly for students engaged in EMI courses. Nevertheless, educators have been reported to burden heavier workloads and pressure than ever since more workshops have been held for them to enhance their teaching and English proficiency (NDC & MOE, 2020; Xu, 2023). What's worse, the learning objectives of EMI courses are distorted because of students' desperately insufficient knowledge of professional terminologies or communication skills. In other words, courses for students are all perceived and described as vocabulary learning purposes (Feng, 2023; Tien, 2023).

The four studies discussed in the previous paragraphs, despite being published, presented less persuasive findings. Firstly, Kuo's (2023) investigation encountered difficulties in validating the authenticity of data collected through online questionnaires. Moreover, discrepancies and potential biases were noted during the observation process conducted by three volunteers, raising concerns about the reliability of the qualitative data. In the study conducted by Tien (2023), different results emerged when comparing the reported benefits and challenges of EMI by students. Additionally, both Pan et al.'s (2023) research and Lee's (2023) study failed to explicitly elucidate the true effects of EMI, as other techniques were integrated into the treatments. To be specific, Pan et al. (2023) incorporated semi-EMI, while Lee's (2023) study involved computer-mediated structured whiteboard. The necessity to consider alternative factors should be underscored when interpreting the outcomes of these studies. Consequently, when the public sought to challenge the bilingual education policy, the published research failed to provide substantial grounds for informed argumentation or effective public persuasion.

Bilingual Teachers' Silent Struggles: Uncharted Speaking Anxiety Territory in Taiwan

According to Wooten (2008), anxiety is described as a negative emotional state of apprehension accompanied by physiological manifestations. In similar fashion, as characterized by Horwitz et al. (1986), the subjective

sensation of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry, known as anxiety, is associated with the arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Therefore, anxiety can be defined as negative feelings that affect mental conditions and physical behaviors. Derived from the study by Horwitz et al. (1986), numerous individuals experience considerable stress in the process of learning a foreign language, especially within classroom settings. With the generalization of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) model, Horwitz et al. (1986) provided three reflective factors, including communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, in attempt to effectively evaluate learning anxiety and subsequently inspired abundant related research (Tien, 2018).

Amidst the prevalence of English as a global language and a particular emphasis on effective communication, several researchers have increasingly focused on speaking anxiety in recent years for the reason that speaking is the most anxiety-inducing aspect in foreign and second language education (Marzec-Stawrarska, 2015; Zilola & Yoqubjon, 2023). Numerous studies have been conducted, predominantly centering on learners of English, with an increasing focus on pre-service teachers worldwide. In terms of exploring learners' speaking anxiety, Nuridzdzati and Akhiriyah (2023) investigated factors that triggered high achievers' English speaking anxiety and their perceptions towards speaking anxiety. The study was a qualitative design by adopting descriptive phenomenology, and 8 high achievers were recruited. Based on descriptive phenomenology, the data analysis involved four steps, which were reading and re-reading, initial coding, developing emergence themes, and interpretation. The results showed that three factors, namely communication comprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, contributed to high achievers' speaking anxiety. Besides, some high achievers perceived speaking anxiety could be great motivation to force them to improve; while, others might feel struggling in the process of performing speaking. In the context of Taiwan, Tien (2018) examined the factors influencing the English speaking anxiety among college students. 658 students volunteered to fill out the questionnaire. Factors contributing to speaking anxiety included grammatical accuracy, insufficient vocabulary size, incorrect pronunciation, and misunderstanding in communication. Besides, more speaking anxiety was found among female students, non-English majors, and experienced learners. Indeed, ample literatures showed that learners of English are challenged by speaking anxiety due to language proficiency and affective factors.

In terms of discovering pre-service teacher's speaking anxiety, Daud et al. (2019) investigated 30 pre-service English teachers in an Indonesia university. Both the questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used to collect data. For the results, social, linguistic, and personal factors were identified as sources of speaking anxiety. In general, most pre-service teachers had moderate speaking anxiety. In the same vein, Mohamad et al. (2023) interviewed 10 pre-service teachers from a private higher learning institution, aiming to categorize factors that produced pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety. This study adopted a case study design. Online semi-structured interviews were carried out individually after the participants finished their oral presentations. Nine categories were found as factors that caused pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety, including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, students' beliefs, self-perceptions, feelings, technological anxiety, technological anxiety, topic or content anxiety, and stressful classroom environment. In the context of special education, Villanueva et al. (2023) applied qualitative-descriptive research design and had 20 prospective special education teachers join in the study. Via semi-structured

interview, factors that triggered speaking anxiety and coping mechanisms were uncovered. For factors that triggered prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety, classmate factor, teacher factor, internal factor, environmental factor, connectivity issues, low self-esteem, overthinking, pressure, afraid of disappointment, not a good speaker, and technological factor were recognized. For coping mechanisms, talking to self, cutting the explanation short, preparing scripts, staying focused, reading in advance, and finding out motivation were identified. To foster competent bilingual teachers, it is critical to thoroughly examine pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety and offer proper and judicious guidance.

However, Horwitz (1996) argued that nonnative foreign language teachers have been reported to feel anxious when they speak in the targeted languages. As a matter of fact, when teachers regularly experience a sense of inadequacy that is disconnected from their desired level of competence, they exhibit a similar anxiety commonly seen in inexperienced learners (Horwitz et al., 1986). Horwitz (1992, 1993, & 1996) further indicated that such anxious feelings had negative effects on classroom instructions. Furthermore, the considerable impact of speaking anxiety on the mental well-being and job satisfaction of foreign language teachers is even more distressing. Given the limited research on speaking anxiety among in-service teachers, it was crucial to disclose and add to existing literature on this issue. Additionally, non-language educators in Taiwan have been tasked with teaching particular subjects in the target language, demonstrating another level of exigency to capture and understand this phenomenon. In the light of this, the current study focused on comprehending the speaking anxiety experienced by bilingual in-service high school teachers in Taiwan Moreover, it aimed to reveal and depict the life world of bilingual in-service high school teachers in Taiwan, providing insights into this phenomenon and its implications for the educational context in Taiwan. Specially, it sought to answer the following two research questions:

1. What meanings arise from bilingual in-service high school teachers' speaking anxiety under the implementation of Bilingual education policy?
2. How do bilingual in-service high school teachers depict the essence of the life world shaped by speaking anxiety and bilingual education policy?

Methodology

Research Design

Originally conceived by Husserl (Barrett-Rodger et al., 2023) and informed by Ajjawi and Higgs's (2007) study, hermeneutic phenomenology was selected as the design of the present study to discover and describe Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' life world. By combining the notion of hermeneutics, whose focus is to interpret the lived experiences, and the notion of phenomenology, whose focus is to express the live experiences (Barrett-Rodger et al., 2023), Hermeneutic phenomenology, one of the various forms of phenomenology research approach, intends to create "rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively" (Smith, 1997, p. 80). According to the purposes and perspectives of the present study, the essence of Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' lived experiences shaped by English speaking anxiety can be thoroughly captured and illustrated via the lens of hermeneutic phenomenology (Dibley et al., 2020).

Participants

A strategic snowball sampling was applied to recruit the participants. By means of this method, individuals possessing desired experiences or traits, based on specified criteria, can be effectively identified (Patton, 1990). In the present study, a total number of 10 bilingual in-service teachers currently teaching in Taiwan high schools agreed to participate in a complete data collection process. Among them, 3 teachers were male; while, the other 7 teachers were female. Besides, 4 teachers were from southern Taiwan, 2 from central Taiwan, and the remaining 4 from northern Taiwan. Their teaching experiences ranged from 13 to 27 years, and all of them have utilized English to teach their subjects content for two years. Regarding their teaching subjects, three participants teach Physical Education, while two teach Mathematics. Additionally, teachers instructing courses in Food and Beverage Management, Music, Economics, International Trade, and Accounting were included. All of them possess master degree diplomas and graduated from Taiwan graduate programs. Also, none of them have been reported with high English proficiency, and it has been more than ten years since they industriously studied English for specific purposes. Table 1 summarized the participants' demographic information.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Region	Teaching Subject	Years of teaching
Andy		South	Physical Education	14
Alex	Male	North	Math	19
Adam		North	Math	18
Bella		South	Physical Education	14
Betty		Central	Food and Beverage Management	20
Becky		North	Economics	15
Brenda	Female	South	Music	13
Bailey		Central	Physical Education	15
Bess		South	Accounting	13
Barbie		North	International Trade	27

Data Collection

Inspired by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), two writing tasks and two lightly different in-depth interviews were devised to elicit ample data responses from the participants. For the two writing tasks, one required the participants to provide responses based on five open-ended questions (see in the appendix B). Informed by Horwitz et al. (1986), those five open-ended questions were created based on the FLCAS questionnaire. The other writing task required the participants to draw a timeline and indicated changes of degrees of speaking anxiety (see in the appendix C). Both writing tasks were completed in written forms, and Mandarin Chinese was used. Besides, both writing tasks were used as foundations and stimuli to generate interview questions during the first two data collection sessions. For the two in-depth interview designs, one type was to use participants' responses as foundations to probe deeper into the meanings. An example question was that the participants were requested to provide more details and explanations for specific answers. This was performed in the first two in-

depth interviews of the data collection sessions. The other type of in-depth interview required the participants to share three most memorable incidents that aroused their speaking anxiety. Based on their stories, the researcher would ask follow-ups questions to understand more details about their feelings and perspectives towards the incidents. An example question was that the participants were asked to try to relate their feelings to the meanings behind those emotions. This was performed in the last data collection session. Both in-person interviews and online interviews were conducted to collect the data. Even though responses for writing tasks were not used for data analysis, they were collected as pieces of evidence to support the results. Most importantly, the participants' responses for the in-depth interviews were recorded via the researcher's smartphone.

Data Collection

A seven-step data collection procedure was implemented to ensure the smooth and reliable progress of the primary study (see Figure 1).
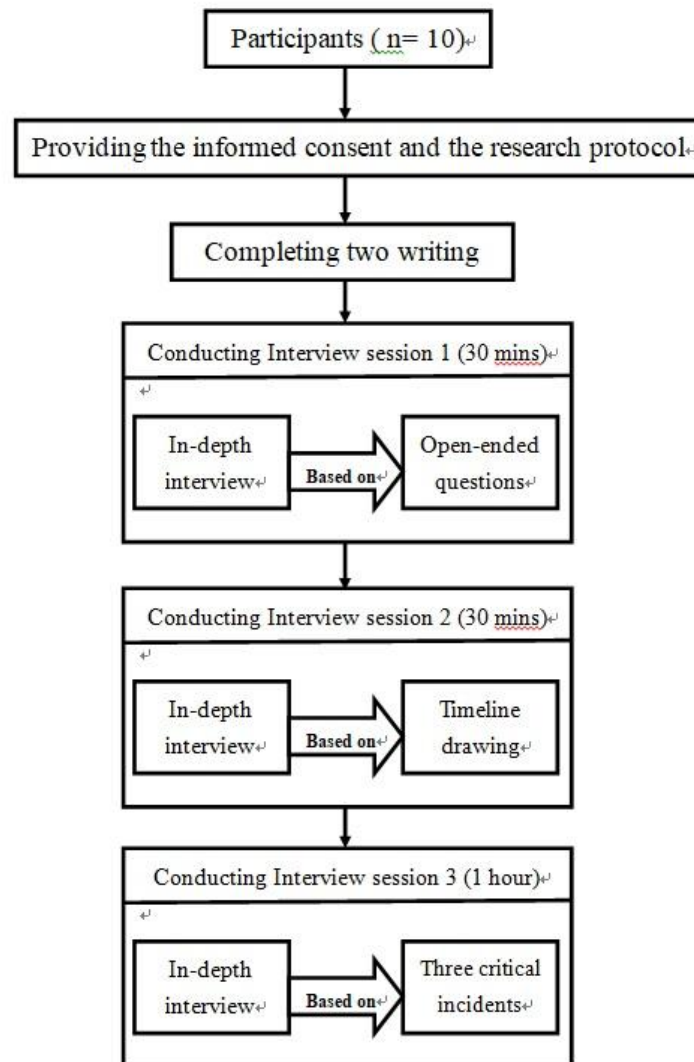

Figure 1. Data Collection Procedure

First, the researcher contacted potential participants and explained the main purposes of the study. Second, as soon as the participants expressed their willingness to participate in the study, the researcher promptly provided them with informed consents (see in the Appendix A) and research proposals to ensure that they obtained a thorough understanding of the study. All the participants mailed back their informed consents. Third, the researcher emailed the participants two writing tasks. 9 participants mailed back their writing tasks in written forms, while one emailed back the file with responses. The forth and the fifth steps were to conduct the first interview and the second interview. Each interview in the first two interview sessions lasted for around 30 minutes. In the third interview session, each interview lasted approximately one hour. The last step was to transcribe recordings of participants' responses, which were then presented to the participants for their approval, marking the completion of the entire data collection procedure.

Data Analysis Procedure

To maintain the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, a six-stage data analysis procedure, adapted from Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), was developed. The first stage, immersion, involved the researcher and three invited scholars repeatedly reading through the transcriptions to generate preliminary interpretations, aiding the coding process. In the second stage, the team identified the first-order constructs, which were then used to identify second-order constructs in the third stage, abstraction. The fourth stage, synthesis and theme development, involved grouping sub-themes into broader themes and elaborating on them. In the fifth stage, illumination and illustration, the researcher reconstructed the interpretations to better illustrate the phenomena. Finally, in the integration and critique stage, a different group of three scholars with qualitative research expertise discussed the interpretations and, after reaching consensus, finalized the findings. This systematic, collaborative approach ensured transparency and rigor in the analysis.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that credibility (validity) and dependability (reliability) are interconnected, with the enhancement of the latter being achieved through the former. To establish credibility, three measures were implemented. First, the instruments were reviewed by an expert in the field of English speaking. Second, transcriptions were sent to participants to complete the member checking process. Third, the intra-rater reliability during the coding stage was found to be $r = .82$, and the inter-rater reliability during the interpretation stage was $r = .86$, confirming a desirably high level of reliability.

Findings

Drawing from the insights shared by participants, themes and interpretations emerged. Each research question was answered and manifested by three themes. Specifically, to answer research question one, three themes were discovered and shown, including (1) challenges that have no end, (2) battles that involve teachers only, and (3) doubts that erode confidence and passion.

To answer research question two, three themes were found and presented, including (1) highly anxious: fighting imaginary enemies, (2) intermediately anxious: struggling with decisions, and (3) mildly anxious: predicable failures.

RQ 1: What Meanings arise from Bilingual in-Service High School Teachers' Speaking Anxiety under the Implementation of Bilingual Education Policy?

Challenges that Have No End

Based on participants' responses, the first major theme that emerged regarding Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' speaking anxiety was the perception of never-ending challenges. Under the bilingual education policy, existing difficulties in the classroom became even more pronounced and unresolved. Teaching subject content in English led to constant scrutiny from students and parents, making these challenges even more complex. Alex's experience exemplifies this struggle. He frequently faced teasing from both students and parents about his English accent, which heightened his anxiety. His responses were presented in the following.

> *"When I teach in English with a heavy Taiwanese accent, some students tease and challenge me. It's always the same students, and I can recognize them just by their voices. Worrying about this has become a part of my life. Their parents also call me repeatedly—many, many times—pointing out errors in my English or grammar. I know these issues will never end. Nowadays, people like to prove they are better by comparing or challenging others, and the bilingual education policy gives them the perfect opportunity to do so."* (Interview 3)

Beyond student and parental pressures, teachers also experienced anxiety due to demands from school administrators and principals. Bailey, for instance, was assigned to teach in a bilingual program not because of her expertise, but because her subject was perceived as less important. The school used her assignment to meet government requirements and secure funding. Her stress intensified when she realized that some teachers were observing her English proficiency rather than her teaching.

> *"I was assigned to teach bilingual classes so that the school could use my records to apply for Ministry of Education funding. The principal announced this decision in an indirect way, saying my subject wasn't important, so it could be used for bilingual classes. He said that no one cared about students' learning outcomes in my subject, so my role was simply to help the school complete this task and demonstrate support for the government. Since then, I've noticed that many teachers deliberately pass by my class to observe my teaching because I teach PE, which takes place outdoors. Some students have even told me that their other subject teachers are just trying to judge whether my English is good or bad."* (Interview 3)

These accounts highlight the deep-seated anxiety and pressure bilingual teachers' face, not only from students and parents but also from school leadership and colleagues.

Battles that Involve Teachers Only

The second theme that emerged from Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' speaking anxiety was a sense of isolation. Some participants hoped for support from their schools, yet when students or parents raised concerns or complaints, teachers were left to handle them alone. Brenda's responses were chosen as an example presented in the following.

> *"As I started teaching in English, I received many complaints. But I was shocked that the principal didn't say anything to the parents and instead told me to handle it myself! (Her volume and tone rose.) He completely avoided anything that might be difficult for him. That made me feel anxious because I knew the complaints would keep coming, and no one would stand by me. I am completely on my own when facing all of this."* (Interview 1)

Bess further contributed to this theme, emphasizing how students' struggles with comprehension in bilingual classes added to teachers' anxiety. She often encountered students who either remained silent or misbehaved, making it difficult to gauge their understanding. This lack of response turned bilingual teaching into a one-sided performance rather than an interactive learning experience. Responses from Bess were displayed in the following.

> *"I usually ask my students questions, but they just keep their heads down and don't respond. Some deliberately reply in Taiwanese, knowing it will frustrate me. If I correct them and ask them to speak English, they find it amusing to keep speaking Taiwanese just to provoke me. In these moments, I get nervous and start speaking in phrases instead of complete sentences. My anxiety grows because, you know… teachers can only guide students now—we can't punish them, not even with serious discussions or reprimands."* (Interview 1)

These responses highlight how bilingual teachers face these battles alone, without adequate institutional support, making their teaching experience even more challenging.

Doubts that Erode Confidence and Passion

A third theme that emerged from Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' speaking anxiety was the growing sense of self-doubt, which gradually diminished their confidence and passion for teaching. Many participants reported that external pressures heightened their anxiety, leading them to question their competence and reconsider their dedication to bilingual education.

> *"My students enjoy correcting my grammar, especially verb forms in different tenses and aspects. Honestly, I feel very nervous because… I can't help making those mistakes. Students keep challenging me by pointing out grammar errors, and I end up losing sleep for several nights because I feel the need to rehearse more. But… I just… I know I can never be fully prepared, yet I still can't sleep. I don't*

know what mistakes I'll make in tomorrow's class. I'm starting to consider quitting this teaching position because the current environment no longer aligns with my expectations. I still have the energy to do something else or learn something new, so changing careers don't seem like a bad idea." (Interview 3)

Besides, Becky reflected on her growing sense of hopelessness and anxiety, particularly after watching several teaching demonstration videos. These videos set high expectations, making her doubt whether she could replicate such success in her own classroom. Her concerns about not being "perfect enough" in speaking English ultimately altered her outlook on teaching. Parts of her responses were shown in the following.

"After watching those successful demonstrations, I understand what the desired outcomes should be, but I also know I won't be able to meet those expectations. Even though I try hard to analyze the details in the videos to improve my teaching, my spoken English just seems to get worse—probably due to nervousness, I guess. I wonder if those teachers in the videos would achieve the same results in my class so I could truly see the impact and learn from them. But these thoughts don't help ease my speaking anxiety or improve my performance. Instead, I keep fixating on those perfect examples in the videos, which only makes me more anxious." (Interview 1)

These accounts demonstrate how constant self-doubt and external pressures gradually erode teachers' confidence and enthusiasm, making it increasingly difficult for them to find fulfillment in bilingual education.

RQ2. How do Bilingual In-Service High School Teachers depict the Essence of the Life World Shaped by Speaking Anxiety and Bilingual Education Policy?

Highly Anxious: Fighting Imaginary Enemies

The first theme that emerged from Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' lived experiences was a sense of directionlessness, which resulted in heightened anxiety. When the bilingual education policy was implemented in 2019, many teachers experienced panic due to both their limited speaking competence and the absence of concrete instructional models. Additionally, the Taiwanese government adopted the concept of continuous correction in bilingual education, requiring teachers to assimilate new concepts while simultaneously managing daily challenges. Parts of Barbie's responses were provided in the following as a piece of evidence.

"When I teach, I feel nervous because I don't know if I'm using the right method or the one preferred by our government. As a teacher, I have to manage many responsibilities. Sometimes, I think it's okay to use some Chinese to help students understand my lectures, but how do I decide the proportion of Chinese to English? I don't know. Imagine a teacher using a method they don't fully understand, and that method keeps changing—how can they develop good speaking skills? You know… they (government officials) always talk about rolling correction. That's insane." (Interview 2)

Similarly, Betty's responses reinforce this theme. According to her, internationalization is closely linked to the

bilingual education policy. However, the lack of concrete guidelines and objectives exacerbated her speaking anxiety, as she felt unprepared and uncertain about what she was supposed to achieve. Parts of her responses were presented in the following.

> *"They (government officials) always talk about achieving internationalization through bilingual education. But what are the concrete goals at each stage? There are so many things that confuse me, and I'm not sure what they mean. One thing is for sure (laughing), my English proficiency isn't strong. When I speak English or teach in every class, I feel like a soldier on a battlefield—without weapons and without knowing who to fight against. That's why I feel nervous—there are no clear objectives or directions."* (Interview 2)

Intermediately Anxious: Struggling with Decisions

The second theme that emerged from participants' responses was the dilemma of continuing bilingual instruction. At this stage, some participants experienced a decrease in speaking anxiety after realizing that students also struggled with speaking anxiety. This awareness shifted their perspective, as they no longer viewed their own anxiety as the central issue. Responses collected from Bess were presented in the follow as supportive data.

> *"In the first few classes, of course, I felt very nervous when speaking English. But after a few lessons, I noticed that some students were also afraid to speak up. They are diligent students, and I know they want to learn and have questions to ask. When I realized this, I started thinking more about the effects of bilingual education rather than my own speaking. As a teacher, I should care more about my students. When I focus on their learning, I feel less anxious about speaking. Maybe I just get distracted."* (Interview 2)

Adam further supported this theme by reflecting on teachers' responsibilities. He struggled with whether to continue bilingual instruction, as many students had difficulty understanding key concepts in class. Parts of his responses were shown in the following.

> *"Learning math is about understanding the concepts. If students struggle to grasp them in Chinese, what's the point of teaching in English? I started thinking about this after a few classes. You know... I don't think my speaking anxiety is as high as it was in the beginning after realizing this. It seems I'm not the only one struggling, and there are more important issues at hand. I began focusing on these real problems instead of fixating on my speaking competence."* (Interview 1)

Mildly Anxious: Predicable Failures

A deeper realization emerged among participants, shaping the third theme of foreseeable setbacks. A sense of resignation toward problematic educational settings gradually reduced bilingual teachers' speaking anxiety, as

they became less concerned about the outcomes. Many participants believed that the bilingual education policy was ultimately bound to fail.

> *"Students often look stunned or… shocked in my class. They just can't understand everything in English. Yes, the policy will fail. Maybe the government will just rename things to cover up the failure—I don't know. So, I don't feel as anxious as I did in the beginning, maybe because no one really cares about the results. I just try to get through class time, and students come to me for clarification afterward. During breaks, we all speak Chinese. Is that what bilingual education is supposed to be? It's hilarious."* (Interview 2)

Furthermore, Andy reflected on past educational policy changes and concluded that the cycle of reforms and failures would continue indefinitely. As long as the implementation of the bilingual education policy remained unstable, fluctuations in teachers' speaking anxiety would persist. This realization led him to care less about speaking anxiety and the overall design of his lessons. Parts of his responses were displayed in the following.

> *"This feels just like all the previous policies. The government keeps changing them. Some publishers even told me privately that certain past policies had failed, so the government had to come up with new ideas to make it seem like nothing went wrong. To be honest, when they (government officials) change policies, we're just expected to follow. It's unfair because we (in-service teachers) don't get a say. It's a never-ending cycle—everything will just start over again. So, why should I still feel anxious about speaking English? The policy is going to fail anyway. Speaking anxiety doesn't matter anymore. Maybe I've just decided not to care. Now, in class, I just teach normally and don't worry about whether I speak English correctly. Sometimes students still challenge my speaking, but I just ignore them."* (Interview 2)

Discussion

According to the findings of the present study, Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers reported their constant speaking anxiety as individual challenges and doubts they face. These anxieties, influenced by their lived experiences, form a cyclical pattern across three distinct levels. This cycle, emerging from their experiences, reflects a progression of increasing tension in relation to speaking anxiety. These findings align with Horwitz's (1996) assertion that non-native teachers often experience language anxiety, which adversely affects their teaching performances.

Moreover, factors contributing to bilingual teachers' speaking anxiety were identified, including concerns over inaccurate grammar, unauthentic pronunciation, and the perceived challenges presented by students. These factors echo those found in studies by Nuridzdzati and Akhiriyah (2023), Tien (2018), and Villanueva et al. (2023). However, the present study extends beyond simply listing these factors and strategies. Rather, it delves into the deeper meanings that emerge from Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' speaking anxiety—an area rarely explored in previous research. By employing hermeneutic phenomenology, this study

offers nuanced insights into the lived experiences of the participants, shedding light on how their anxiety relates to wider public concerns, such as the calls for the cessation of bilingual education in Taiwan (United Daily News, 2023). These findings reveal not only the personal but also the societal dimensions of speaking anxiety, creating a richer understanding of the issue. Bella's responses provided supports for this discussion.

> *"In teaching, many things are actually interrelated. Whenever there are challenges, a sense of helplessness appears. Sometimes, I have doubts on my speaking competence when I am challenged. Is it possible to separate the factors clearly? I believe that's the problem of our government. Always simplify the issues and eager to give solutions without fully understand what's happening. In the end, this (the bilingual education policy) will stop."* (Interview 1)

Additionally, the study uncovers the intricate web of interrelated meanings generated by the participants. These meanings, rather than being isolated experiences, are seen as perpetual and internal forces that shape the teachers' life world. This life world, as informed by their cyclical experiences of speaking anxiety, evolves over time, highlighting the persistent internal struggles teachers face. This cyclical nature suggests that each phase of anxiety feeds into the next, reinforcing the cycle and deepening the impact on their teaching identity and practice. Figure 2 visually represents these interconnected phases.
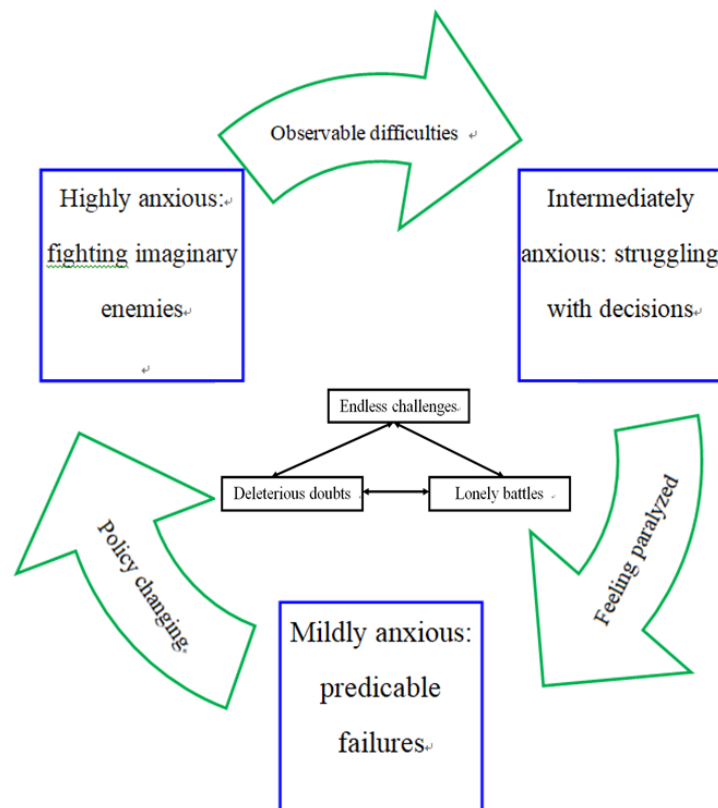

Figure 2. Taiwanese Bilingual In-Service High School Teachers' Life World Representation Shaped by English Speaking Anxiety

In contrast to Kao's (2023) study, which found that many secondary teachers in Taiwan supported bilingual instruction, the present study offers a more complex picture of bilingual in-service high school teachers'

struggles with speaking anxiety. It suggests that future research in this area would benefit from utilizing more comprehensive data collection instruments. This would allow for a more thorough exploration of teachers' lived experiences, ensuring that research provides meaningful insights that genuinely reflect the realities faced by educators.

For instance, Alex, one of the participants, critiqued existing research on Taiwan's bilingual education policy, highlighting the disconnection between the research conducted and the lived experiences of teachers in the field. His comment underscores the need for research that captures the true conditions faced by teachers, rather than relying on surface-level data. As Alex remarked:

> "*I can tell you this. Taiwan's bilingual education policy will fail because the government only believes in some of the researchers and their research. I don't know when they do their research or how they do it exactly. I have never seen them, nor have my friends. If the research, using online questionnaires, shows everything positive, does that really mean anything? It's all junk research. None of those studies attempts to understand the real conditions that in-service teachers are facing or they intentionally ignore it. This gap will never change as long as most of the research serves other purposes instead of reflecting the truth of the environment.*" (Interview 2)

This criticism further supports the existence of a gap between policy-makers, researchers, and educators in the field. As Chang (2025) points out, there is a perceived disconnect between what is conveyed in policy discourse and how it is interpreted by the public. Given that the public's language orientations are relational, shifting, and multilayered, and are embedded in broader language dynamics (Kaveh, 2023), this gap is likely to persist. As argued by Feng (2024), employing multiple research approaches, such as a longitudinal approach, is essential for addressing the complex and context-specific issues within bilingual education. For example, a longitudinal approach can provide insights into the long-term impact of bilingual education on academic and linguistic outcomes (Chen et al., 2025).

Conclusion

By applying hermeneutic phenomenology, the present study described and interpreted Taiwanese bilingual in-service high school teachers' life world shaped by their experiences of speaking anxiety. In the light of the findings, the absence of explicit recognition of institutional and governmental support for bilingual in-service high school teachers in Taiwan under the implementation of the bilingual education policy is concerning. Experienced teachers should not be left to handle their well-being and job satisfaction independently. Rather, it is crucial for both the government and institutions to acknowledge their oversights and establish a more concrete and systematic framework before the implementation of the bilingual education policy. This not only guarantees their success during this phase but also empowers them to choose a path of sustained, positive retention, particularly as they transition into bilingual teaching (Shin et al., 2023).

In spite of the meaningful findings and implications, two limitations as well as directions for future study were

identified. First, the present study targeted at Taiwan secondary in-service teachers' lived experiences. However, little is known towards in-service teachers serving in different schools' levels. To address this gap, the future studies are encouraged to conduct multiple comparisons among teachers across diverse school levels. Exploring and observing influences from both one-way and two-way interactions could provide valuable insights in this regard. Second, a longitudinal study is encouraged since the policy continues to change. The findings of the present study are the representations of the current phenomena. Thus, a longitudinal approach would allow for a more in-depth examination and expansion of in-service teachers' life world over time.

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Appendix A. The Informed Consent

敬愛的研究參與者您好：

　　本人是國立政治大學英語學系博士班的學生，感謝您願意接受實驗施測，參與本研究計畫的進行，在此致上真摯的謝意！基於尊重您願意接受並參與本研究的意願及保障您的權益，以下將向您說明，此研究的相關訊息。

　　本研究主題是「台灣高中職教師英語授課口語焦慮之研究」，研究目的是希望藉由此研究瞭解台灣高中職教師對於自我英語授課口語焦慮的省思，並進而瞭解其影響因素為何。

　　研究過程及結果均作為研究用途，均不對校內或個人公佈。為了保障您的隱私權，本研究中，有關您個人資料（如姓名、服務學校、足以辨認出您身份的資料內容）均不呈現。

　　進行正式研究時，時間週期約5週，將先實施紙筆回饋，接著實施3次訪談。訪談實施地點可為線上或是研究者覺得舒適的實體地點；紙筆回饋將須回收作研究分析之用途，訪談過程亦會全程錄音。

　　研究結束後，相關資料、研究結果的呈現，均會經過您的檢核後，才會列入研究報告中。再次感謝您的參與，使本研究更臻豐富與完善。

協議事項：

一、作業完成後，接受餽贈作業乙份：　　　　□1.接受

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　□2.不接受

　　　　受訪者：　　　　　（簽名）

　　　　研究者：　　　　　（簽名）

　　　　　　　　　　　中華民國　年　月　日

Appendix B. Open-ended Questions

開放式問答 (Open-ended Questions)：

a. 每當身處在英語授課前的活動（備課、試教等）時，你心中多有何感受呢?

  (Whenever you are doing pre-class activities (such as preparation, practices, …etc), how do you usually feel at those moments?)

b. 每當身處在英語授課中的課程活動（授課、與學生英語對談等），你心中多有何感受呢?

   (Whenever you are doing in-class activities, (such as lecturing, conversing with students in English), how do you usually feel at those moments?)

c. 每當討論到或聽到「英語授課」一詞，你心中多有何感受呢?

   (Whenever you hear the phrase "teaching in English", how do you usually feel at those moments?)

d. 每當回顧自我英語授課之情景，你心中多有何感受呢?

   (Whenever you review your own English lectures, how do you usually feel at those moments?)

e. 如果你有機會觀看其他同事或是教育先進們的英語授課影片，你心中多有何感受呢?

   (If you have chances to watch videos of your colleagues or other prominent teachers' teaching demonstration, how do you usually feel at those moments?)

Appendix C. An Example of Timeline Drawing

2020 — 2021 — 2022 — 2023 →

2020：試辦雙語教學（元滿無奈，教育部高官不知教學現場狀況，說左直右的承平塔）

2021：108課綱不三屆入學（學習學習狀況初自我要求）

2022：第二次因疫情線上上課（學習效果超差）半年沒念下，尤其疫情線上

2023：雙語教學效果極差（應立即停辦）效果比前一年更差）