

HPEN7005

English Language Teacher Education

Assignment 2: Mini Proposal

**An Experimental Study on the Impacts of teacher's L1 use
on students' speaking performance in EFL class**

—— From the perspective of Input Hypothesis

PROFDOC ELEEL Programme

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Mini Proposal

1. Title

The title of the proposed research is: “An Experimental Study on the Impacts of teacher’s L1 use on students’ speaking performance in EFL class – From the perspective of Input Hypothesis”.

This mini proposal is closely linked with what we have learnt in the module of English Language Teacher Education. Firstly, the proposal focuses on L1 use in EFL class which concept is also referred as “code-switching” (Macaro, 2001) or “own-language (as opposed to the ‘new language’) use” (Hall & Cook, 2012), and it is an important issue in this module. Moreover, we aim to improve teacher’s code-switching by applying the strategy with modified amount of L1 use in the experiment, and then examine whether this strategy will help facilitate students’ language learning results, which will have many practical implications on TEFL. Thirdly, major theories in second language acquisition (SLA) are crucial foundation for L2 teaching, this research will apply Krashen’s landmark Input Hypothesis to L2 teaching practice, and attempt to contribute more experimental evidence to the application of SLA theories.

2. Aims of the investigation

As indicated by its title, this research will focus on bilingual teachers’ L1 use in EFL class, here we are talking the situation that the teacher and students share the same L1. First of all, we need to understand how much and in what kinds of sentences L1 is used in the class before we conduct the experiment, and more importantly, to understand to

what level students can comprehend teacher's speeches with the current L1 engagement. This is because the language input has to be comprehensible in order for students to acquire the second language (Krashen, 1982), and one major role for L1 to be used in EFL class is to help students comprehend what the teacher says in L2 and build more cognitive understanding (Ellis & Shintani, 2014), and this is our first aim, which outcomes will serve as the foundation for the later procedures of the research.

Secondly, based on the knowledge obtained in the first stage, we aim to offer a strategy of a modified L1 use through which teacher can better facilitate students' L2 learning. (Theories underpinning the strategy will be elaborated in Part 3.) Then, the next aim (also the next stage) is to apply the suggested strategy and examine how it works in improving students' foreign language (FL) performance, and as we choose speaking as the specific aspect to investigate, we will therefore particularly test students' speaking performance in this case. By reaching these goals, we hope to shed light on the role and the practical implication of teacher's code-switching in TEFL.

3. The rationale and main conceptual themes for the investigation

(1) Focus: teacher's code-switching

Teacher's code-switching in the class is a very important research topic because it closely relates to students' L2 learning as it directly provides the language input. In earlier researches in late 19th century, the main belief was that the best way to teach and learn a FL was through that new language only, but in more recent studies, the findings have taken a turn from monolingual to bilingual methods by introducing teacher's proper use of L1 (Hall & Cook, 2012, p.272).

The amount of L1 use

However, many teachers still often express uncertainty in whether or to what extent they should use L1 in the EFL class (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p.225). There is an extensive debate on this issue. Those who stand for less L1 use stress the importance of L2 exposure, a crucial factor affecting SLA (Baker, 2014, p.39), for example, suggested by Kalivoda (1990), teachers should use as much L2 as possible and only leave a 10-minute slot for L1 use to double check students' understanding of major concepts in the class through questions and discussions in L1. But other scholars, on the other hand, advocates that L1 helps enhance students' understanding of knowledge from cognitive perspective, especially in addressing comprehension problems such as grammar, etc (Edstrom, 2006). Moreover, students report less anxiety when more L1 included (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p.229) and bilingual teaching methods facilitate bicultural awareness (Hall and Cook, 2012, p.273). Such uncertainty will lead to confusion and randomness in teacher's code-switching and will then probably leads to low efficiency of student's L2 learning. Therefore, it is very important to research on this topic.

L1 use in different speech functions

Moreover, teacher's talk relates to different functions or purposes: whether it is to explain a certain key linguistic aspect – phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, or for the purpose of classroom management, such as the words “Everyone pay attention”, “don't be late”, etc. and there is evidence showing that the optimal amount of teacher's L1 use can also vary in terms of different functions (Polio & Duff, 1994). For instance, it is reasonable to infer that the right pronunciation requires more amount of the right L2 input, but for semantical learning on the other hand, Lally (2000) believes that more L1 use will be beneficial because planning ideas in L1 results in

more elaborate meanings and improved logic in organising sentences. Therefore, to make the research more comprehensive, the data needs to be collected, grouped and analysed based on different functions, and the strategy will be offered and implemented accordingly as well.

(2) Theories in experimental design: Input Hypothesis

The rationale for making the L1-use strategy is Krashen's Input Hypothesis. According to Krashen (1982, 1985, and 1991), only comprehensible input is effective in L2 learning, that is to say, the meaning of L2 input should be understandable. Moreover, L2 acquisition follows an 'i+1' input model where 'i' represents the current L2 competence and 'i+1' means a competence level that a bit higher than the current one, and this can be achievable with the help of communication context or metalinguistic knowledge, etc. (Krashen, 1982, p.21). This is how learners acquire the second language. These two important points are the major content of Krashen's famous *Input Hypothesis* which has been widely recognised as a vital theoretical foundation underpinning SLA.

In this research, Input Hypothesis is also the theoretical foundation in making the L1-use strategy. When students believe that they are below the point where they can fully comprehend some content of the class, the teacher then should add more L1 to clarify the points in order to make them comprehensible. On the contrary, if students claim that they can totally understand what the teacher says in FL, then a suggestion will be to switch some L1 into L2, adding more challenges to students so that they can learn something new through the 'i+1' model. In the case that students can generally understand teacher's talk with the help of some guessing and inference, the suggestion

will be to keep the same amount of L1 as the current level, because this is already a suitable level as it fits for the two conditions of the Input Hypothesis.

(3) Process: action research

While many studies look at teachers' and learners' attitudes towards L1-use by conducting surveys (Podromou, 2002), less papers attempt to examine the issue from practical and experimental perspective. This is a research gap and we would like to take a step further, and in addition to student's attitude survey, we will also apply the strategy with modified L1-use to the real classroom and examine its effectiveness. In this context, action research will be a preferred method in research process. It is a systemic and cyclic process that involves 1) posing a question, 2) designing an experiment, 3) carrying out a course of action, 4) collecting and analysing data and 5) reflection, so to better understand one particular aspect of teaching and thus improving the teaching practice (Ferrance, 2000, p.2; Thomas, 2013, p.243).

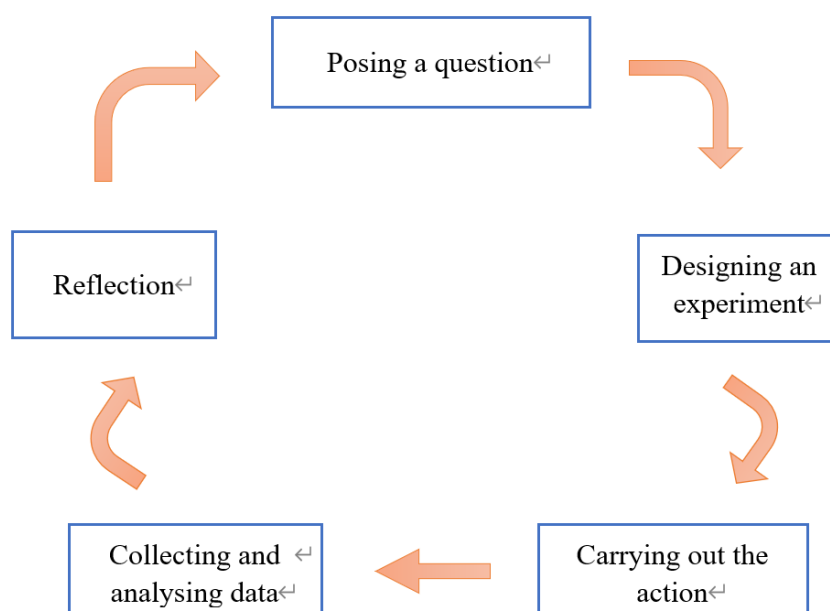


Figure 1: Procedures of Action Research

Posing a question

With the focus of teacher's code-switching and the research setting of Chinese college students learning English, spoken English in particular, the research question is to find out to what extent the bilingual English teacher should use L1(Chinese) in EFL class, in order to improve students' spoken English performance.

Designing an experiment

In designing the experiment to examine the effects of modified L1 use on students' FL learning results, major issues such as who are the subjects (see Part 6), how long will the experiment last (see Part 9), how to evaluate students' progress (see Part 5), What will be the strategy and its justification (see Part 3), what data needs to be collected (see Part 4), and relevant ethical issues (see Part 7) should be considered and planned.

Carrying out the action

We will carry out the experiment through which necessary data will be collected, and we also need to observe and monitor the process, ensuring the strategy is well applied.

Data collection and analysis

In this stage, we will gather the data, use proper methods to interpret the data (see Part 8) and then come to the conclusion.

Reflection

To make it more comprehensive, reflections will come from perspectives of both participating students and researchers. We will justify the experiment results, identify merits and shortcomings, and offer suggestions for further improvement.

4. A description of the evidence you intend to collect

First of all, the goal of this research is to examine whether adopting a certain strategy in teacher's L1 use can lead to students' improved performance in spoken English, therefore we need at least two speaking tests, one pre-test and one post-test so that we can compare to see if there is any progress.

Moreover, in order to offer a particular L1-use strategy, we will need the information of previous level of L1 usage and students' reflection on whether they can fully understand or understand with a bit challenge or hardly be able to understand teacher's talks in terms of different functions with previous level of L1 engagement.

Furthermore, we need the process-control to make sure the suggested strategy is carried out as planned during the whole implementation process, that is to say, we will need evidence of L1 amount before and after adopting the strategy, so to monitor and calibrate the experiment.

Lastly, in the reflection part, in addition to the self-reflection, it will be more useful if we have evidence of students' reflection, for example, how do students perceive the modified L1 amount in the class, does it really helpful as we anticipate, or is there any problems or advice from the students? etc.

To make it clear, in the following chart, we indicate six main data we need to collect in the research (see that in the orange-coloured frame) and the timepoint it should be collected (see the orange-coloured arrow)

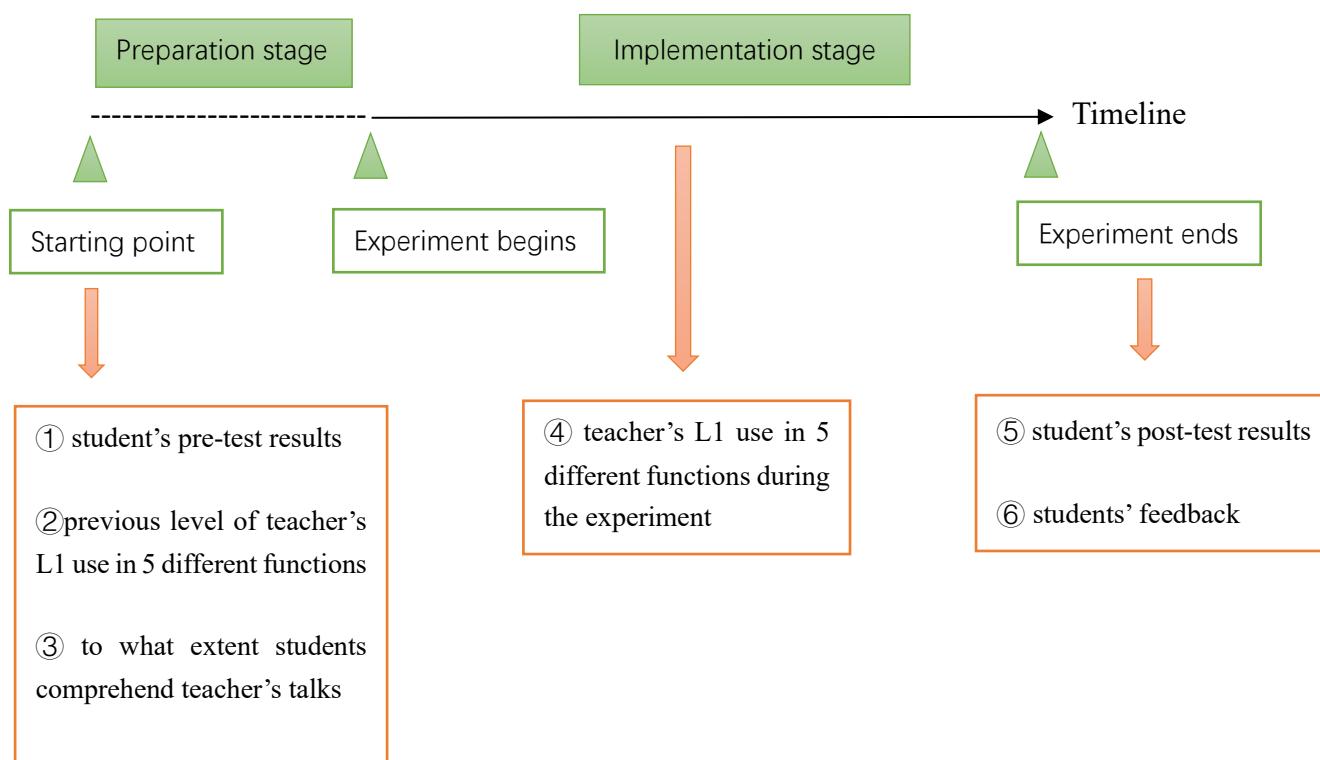


Figure 2: Evidence that need to be collected in the research

5. The methods you plan to use to collect your evidence

The methods to collect the abovementioned evidence include: IELTS speaking test, class recordings, questionnaires and interviews.

(1) Pre-test and post-test: IELTS speaking test

In the pre- and post- tests, we are going to use the speaking test of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and its evaluation standard which include 4 dimensions: 1) Fluency and coherence, 2) Grammar range and accuracy, 3) Lexical resources, and 4) Pronunciation. Each student will take a 15-to-20-minute speaking test with former IELTS examiner and they will be marked with 4 sub-scores in each

dimension according to the exam evaluation criteria.

The first reason of choosing it is because that IELTS speaking exam is a scientific, standard, and well-designed model of testing students' speaking competence fairly and accurately (IELTS, n.d.). More importantly, the four dimensions tested in the exam is associated with the four major linguistic aspects, pronunciation dimension tests students' competence in phonetics, lexical resources dimension tests morphology, Grammar range and accuracy dimension tests Syntax, and Fluency and coherence dimension tests semantics, which well-reflect and echo the four specific functions of teacher's talk in the class.

Test dimensions in the evaluation standard of IELTS speaking exam		Address key linguistic aspects		Reflect different functions of teacher's talk
Pronunciation	↔	Phonetics / phonology	↔	Phonetics / phonology
Lexical resources	↔	Morphology	↔	Morphology
Grammar range and accuracy	↔	Syntax	↔	Syntax
Fluency and coherence	↔	Semantics	↔	Semantics
Classroom management				

Figure 3: Rationale of choosing IELTS speaking test in the research

That's why we need four sub-scores in these four testing dimensions, and it corresponds with the evidence we collect in teacher's L1 use in terms of different functions, making the designed research more scientific, ingenious and delicate.

(2) Previous and in-process levels of teacher's L1 use: Class recordings

To collect data of how much L1 has been used in the classroom, we will record the classes and analyse the word counts of L1 and FL respectively used in different speech functions. More specifically, we firstly transfer it into scripts, group them in five categories as each one represents a certain speech function: namely scripts for teacher's addressing phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and classroom management (others) respectively. Then scripts for each category will be divided into two parts based on different languages the teacher uses, which will at last provide us the proportion of L1 as opposed to FL used in the class.

It is more objective and reliable to use class recordings, rather than teachers' self-report on how much they have used L1, as teachers' own perception is not always correct (Cheng, 2015). Also, it will be more scientific to calculate L1 vs. L2 proportion through the word counts rather than the respective speech time in the recordings, because, if using the latter method, other factors such as thinking time, learner's speeches, discussions that simultaneously have mixed languages may affect the data too. So, the method using word counts will be more accurate.

(3) To what extent students can comprehend teacher's talks: Questionnaires

In terms of the extent to which students can comprehend teacher's talks, we are going to use questionnaires that measure students comprehend level in five aforementioned functions using five-point Likert scale which allows participants to score their most true feelings from minimal (1) to maximum (5).

As a quantitative method, questionnaires enable us to gain more authors' bias-free and objective data (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996), with relatively higher efficiency compared

with qualitative methods especially when it comes to the researcher's time and effort (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2019, p.6), and it can cover a large range of participants to reach a more wholistic and generalised conclusion (Thomas, 2013, p.188). By quickly getting the big picture using questionnaires, we can better justify the suggested strategy we are going to offer in the next stage of the experiment.

(4) Students' feedback to the experiment: Interviews

We will conduct 2-3 in-depth interviews to collect students' feedback regarding the outcomes of the L1 strategy and their feelings during the experiment. This is because the data we need to collect has to be very detailed and specific, and during the experiment, students may have encountered some unanticipated experience or ad-hoc issues. So instead of giving fixed questions as what quantitative methods do, interviews, or qualitative methods, provide a flexible framework which allows students to give more detailed answers (Thomas, 2013, p.188). Through interviews, we can drill the issue with more depth and understand students' true feelings towards the L1-use strategy in the class.

Data needs to be collected	Methods for collecting data
① Student's pre-test results	IELTS speaking test
② Previous level of teacher's L1 use in 5 different functions	Class recordings
③ To what extent students comprehend teacher's talks	Questionnaires
④ Teacher's L1 use in 5 different functions during the experiment	Class recordings
⑤ Student's post-test results	IELTS speaking test
⑥ Students' feedback	Interviews

Figure 4: Methods for collecting necessary data

6. A description of the settings in which you plan to collect your evidence

We will discuss the research settings from the Who, Where, When and What questions.

Who: The research is targeted on the English-majored, second-year college students in one Chinese university who have Chinese as their L1 and English as their FL. It will be a case study of one class, so about 50 student-participants. We choose this group because, with unified academic background we can better control other variables. Also, different motivations may lead to students' different needs for L1, for high school students whose main goal is to pass China's College Entrance Exam, they perhaps need more L1 for better metalinguistic understanding, but this is not a worry for college students who can therefore have more "integrative motivation" (Lightbown & Spada, 2000), especially those who major in English.

Where: We choose a university in China, because China has made English a compulsory subject from middle school to university and worked hard to create a sound EFL learning environment (Wang, 2008), so a study in China will make practical implications more relevant.

When: The experiment implementation will last for one semester so that we can have sufficient time to collect evidence. Also, the teacher in the experiment should have taught the students for at least one semester before the experiment so that we are able to collect the data of previous level of teacher's L1 use and students' attitudes, so the second-year can be a good choice.

What: we will focus on the spoken English class, because English speaking is considered to be the most challenging aspect as it is generally the lowest score among

listening, speaking, reading and writing in IELTS for most Chinese people (IELTS, 2019). So, research and suggestion on it will bring more implications and help with what most in need. Of course, the four aspects (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are all important and need a specified research respectively, and this can be the direction for future research.

7. The ethical issues you have to consider

Ethics concern the moral principles or rules of deciding what is right and wrong behaviours (Longman, n.d.). This is particularly important when it applies to research practices because it safeguards the welfare and rights of participants, researchers and other stakeholders, and ensures the research is conducted in line with the appropriate moral, legal, and professional standards and codes with integrity (UWTSD, n.d.). The ethical issue is relevant to all stages of the research, from its design all the way to its completion. There are several important organisations setting relevant research ethical guidelines, such as British Educational Research Association (BERA), UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) and of course, the University (UWTSD) to which this mini proposal is going to submit and the Chinese university where this experiment is going to take place. As most relevant to this research, according to the ethical principles of BERA (2018) and UWTSD (see the official website), the highlighted ethical considerations in this research include:

(1) Responsibilities to participants

Consent: it is necessary to have the consent from all the involving participants before carrying out the experiment, ensuring that they are fully informed about what would

happen in the research and they are engaging on the voluntary basis. For example, they should be informed that they will be needing to take tests, some of the classes and interviews will be recorded, and the teacher will change the amount of L1 use in the classroom, etc. We will ask all participants to fill out a consent form before the experiment. Moreover, it should be an ongoing consent, that is to say, participant's right of withdrawing from the research at any stage should be respected.

Privacy and data security: While doing the research, we need to always keep in mind the anonymity of the participants, for example, the questionnaires to be sent at the beginning will be anonymous and we will also use pseudonyms to address interviewees at the last reflection part. Likewise, the speaking test results will be confidential and strictly confined among the researcher, the examiner, the English teacher in the class, and the specific student, for the purpose of this research only. In case of any change in the confidentiality, participants should be informed in written forms in light of the potential detriment that may be raised by doing so, and participants should have the choice to accept or reject the change. When it comes to the use and storage of the data to be collected, we also need to ensure that it complies with the relevant legal requirements stipulated in the UK Data Protection Act (2018) and other relevant acts.

Experimenter power: In this action research, the English teacher in the class also happens to be an experimenter who are in charge of the class and responsible for changing the variable – the L1 use in the class – as designed by the research, So, we need to be aware of and minimise the possible data bias generated from the experimenter power or the authoritativeness of the teacher in the class.

(2) Responsibilities to sponsors and stakeholders

As a proposal submitted to the UWTSD, this research needs to be handed to the

University's Research Ethics Committee (REC, see the official website) for risk assessment and ultimately the ethical approval and their advice accordingly. We should also obtain the ethical clearance and organisation's consent from the host Chinese university for allowing this experiment to be done with their students in the classroom.

(3) Responsibilities to the community of researchers

For the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the research and the credibility of the researchers' community, misconducts such as fabrication and falsification of the data (see UWTSD's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice) should be strictly prohibited.

8. The methods you expect to use to analyse the evidence you collect

(1) Contrast analysis

Contrast analysis is an effective statistical method for testing theoretical predictions by comparing the data of different groups or of different timepoints (Haans, 2018), and it is particularly relevant to this experiment. Firstly, this method will be used to compare each student's performance at pre-test and post-test, and to examining the theoretical predictions which in this case is that students will make progress in their spoken English competence as the result of the suggested code-switching strategy being applied in the class, and this suggested strategy is built on the theory of Input Hypothesis. So, by contrasting students' performance, we can infer whether the suggested strategy really works. Moreover, when doing contrast analysis, the category of the data needs to be considered too, that is to say, the four sub-scores in the pre- and post- tests of each student will be contrasted too. Additionally, this analysis method will also be used to compare teacher's L1 amount at the beginning and during the process of the experiment,

so to help with process control and ensure that the strategy of teacher's L1 use has been well implemented.

(2) Qualitative analysis

In the analysis of the data collected in the interview, we are going to use Strauss & Corbin's framework (1998) for qualitative analysis. We will first 1) write the scripts of the interviews; 2) start coding process by asking questions such as "what is really happening in the data?", "what's student's main concern in relates to teacher's L1 use?", "what students dislike in the experiment?", "what category is indicated in certain lines of the scrips?" etc. (Holton, 2007); then 3) develop the categories from coded data and try to find out generalised patterns or shared opinions that students have towards their experience in the research; and 4) write memos by analytically interpreting the data and categories, so to develop the level of abstraction and attempt to build a conclusion or even a grounded theory (Lempert, 2007). Though this is a very demanding process that requires generalisation and abstract-thinking skills, it can be very rewarding as we can better understand what truly happens in the experiment directly from first-hand participants' perspectives and have more practical suggestions to further improve the experiment. This analysis process can be assisted with computer technologies such as NVivo software.

(3) Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis is also needed in the research when it comes to estimate students' current level of understanding teacher's talks and analyse students' performance in two speaking tests and the difference that students have made in each sub-score of two tests. Statistics such as mean value, variance and homogeneity will be calculated, so to generate pattern and come to conclusion, and SPSS will be used in the quantitative analysis.

(4) Gibb's reflection analysis

In the reflection, we will use Gibb's reflective model (My. Cumbria, 2020) which contains 6 stages: 1) describe what happened in the experiment, 2) describe researchers' reactions in the experiment and their feelings, 3) evaluate the pros and cons in the experiment, 4) analyse in details the merits and shortcomings and make sense of the situation, 5) conclude what we have learnt through the experiment, and 6) provide suggestion for what we are going to do differently to make improvement. So, in this part, we will justify the experiment results, and it the case that the experiment results may not exactly as what we anticipated, we will also provide possible explanations, such as other possible affecting factors. The merits and shortcomings will also be discussed. Moreover, we are going to reflect from perspectives of both researchers and students through self-reflective report and interviews. Suggestions for research in the next phase will be discussed at the last part of the reflection.

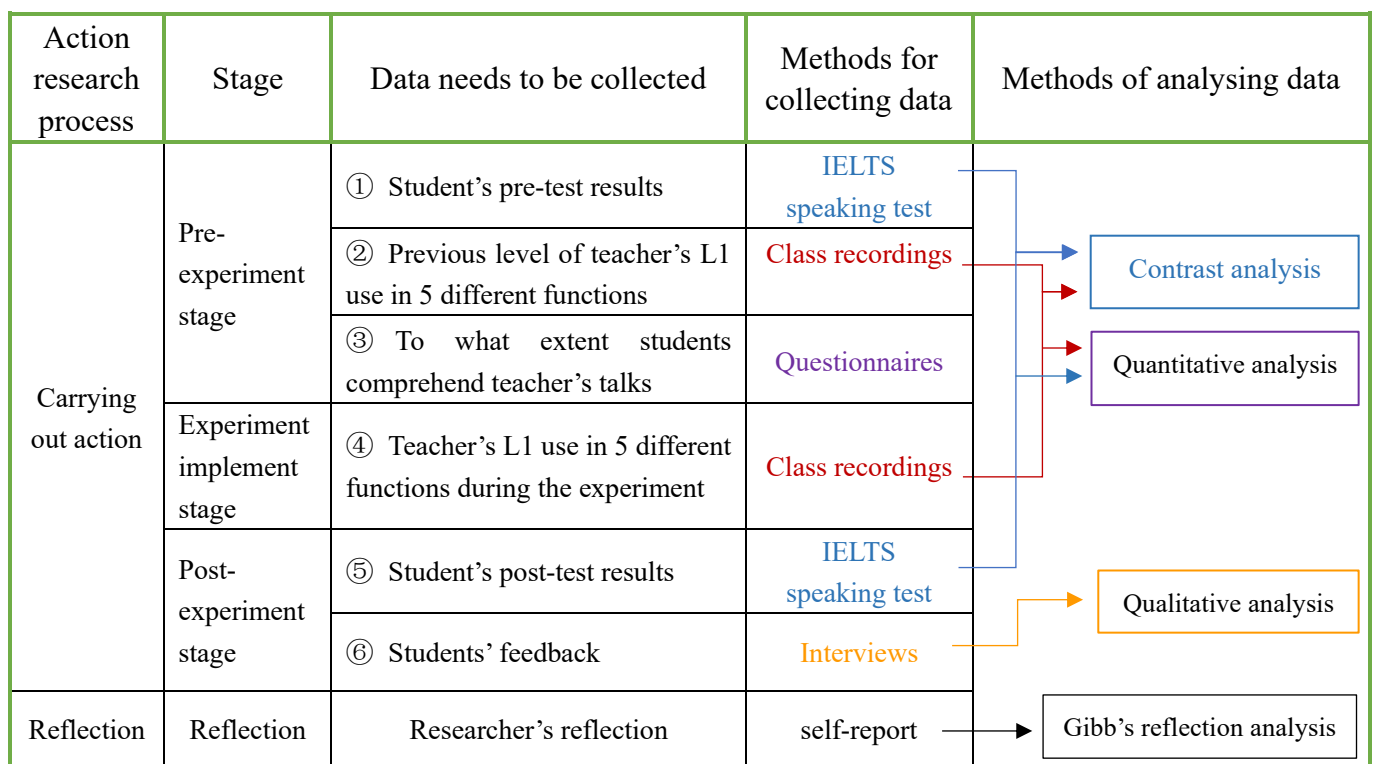


Figure 5: Logic diagram of the research process and methods for data collection and analysis

9. The timetable for the proposed project

In this action research, there will be five major procedures: posing a question, designing an experiment, carrying out the action, collecting and analysing data, and reflection (See Part 2), and in each procedure, there will be a couple of more specific steps from reading around at the very beginning to paper writing at the end, making altogether 13 steps in this proposed project. It is estimated to take about one year to complete the project.

To make it clear, we will draw a project timeline which is also referred to as a Gantt Chart (Thomas, 2013, p.77), as in Figure 4.

It is important to make sure that we plan enough time for each step, especially those steps involving factors that may be out of our control, such as reaching out to experiment participants, gaining ethical clearance, etc. The timeline should always be kept handy and serve as a good reminder. Skills such as do a little every day, think ahead, set yourself targets, keep regular and balanced life, keep reporting the progress to the supervisor, etc. will be very helpful in keeping up with the timeline.

Timeline of the Project

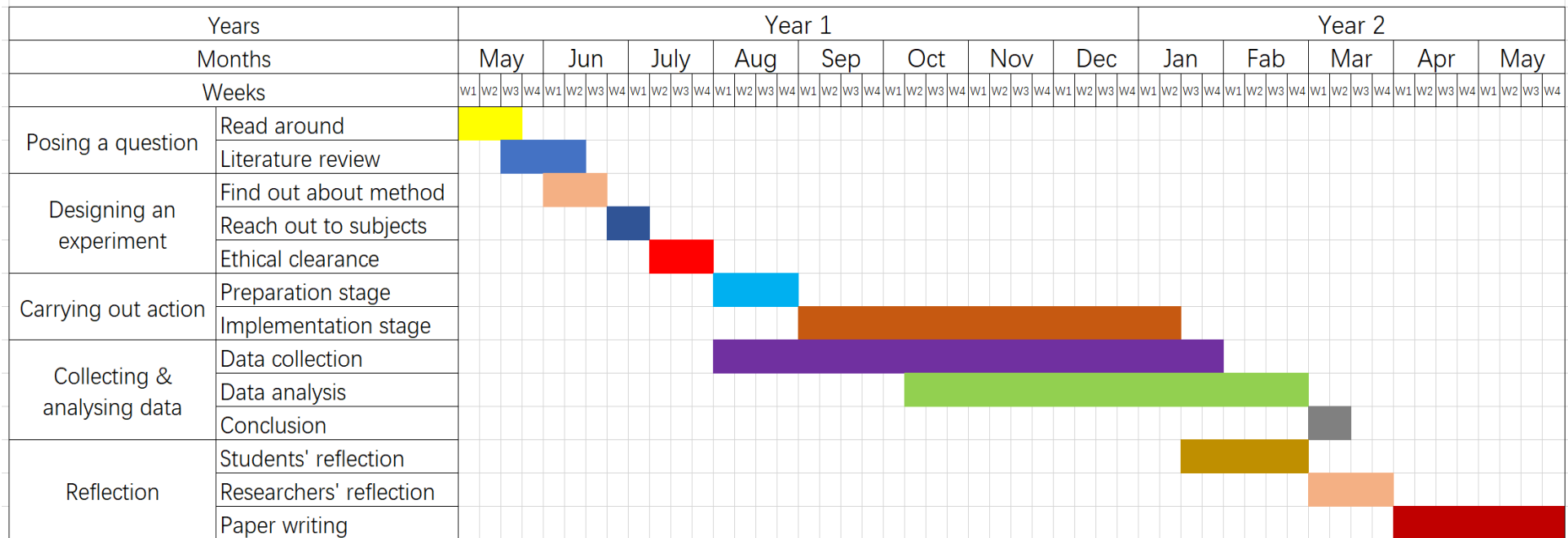


Figure 6: Timeline of the Project

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